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Elizabeth Worcester Mills.

THE TALKING IMAGE OF URUR

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THE TALKING IMAGE

OF

U R U R

BY

FRANZ HARTMANN, M. D.

If we wish to know what "Life" really is, we must look not merely at its surface, but into its depths; we must behold it as it is, and not merely admire the picture which we have formed of it in our imagination.

NEW YORK:

JOHN W. LOVELL COMPANY

150 WORTH ST., COR. MISSION PLACE

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BY
JOHN W. LOVELL.

TO MY PERSONAL FRIENDS AND TEACHERS,

Helene Petrowna Blavatsky

AND

Col. Henry S. Olcott,

THE STORY OF

"THE TALKING IMAGE OF URUR"

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE following tale has a certain historical aspect. The events described therein or their equivalents have actually taken place, and the characters of the story are, so to say, composite photographs of still living people. Nevertheless, this book has not been written for the purpose of throwing discredit upon any person who may have cause to imagine himself caricatured therein. It was written with the sole object of showing to what absurdities a merely intellectual research after spiritual truths will lead ; or to express it in other words, that it is foolish to attempt a scientific investigation of the nature of the Holy Ghost, if one has not the spirit of truth and holiness within one's own self. The story represents the vain struggles of a soul for light, and how at last the truth came to it without any struggle.

Thus in attempting to show the difference between true spirituality and sophistry, or between true religion and what is most properly rejected as mysticism, spiritism and metaphysical speculation, I believe that I am rendering a service to the cause of the Truth.

THE AUTHOR.

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The following open letter, written by the author of "THE TALKING IMAGE OF URUR" to the press will be of interest to readers of this work, correcting the misapprehensions to which the mutilated text, as it appeared serially, might give rise.

THE PUBLISHERS.

Permit me to call attention to the fact that my story entitled "THE TALKING IMAGE OF URUR," which appeared serially in the pages of *Lucifer*, has been entirely disfigured by the editors of that journal; owing perhaps to Madame Blavatsky's inability to attend to editorial work during her recent illness. The story represents the adventures of a "theosophical Don Quixote" who seeks for wisdom everywhere except in the right place. He joins a "Society for Distribution of Wisdom" in the East; but finds nothing but folly. Finally, in the last chapter, he discovers that true wisdom cannot be found anywhere except by the attainment of the knowledge of self. It is, therefore, plain that in the last chapter culminates the gist of the story and that without that chapter the whole story loses its point; the preceding ones being merely preparatory to that.

Nevertheless, for reasons best known to themselves, the editors of *Lucifer* have left out the entire chapter, all except its closing paragraph. In this emasculated shape the story, instead of being what it otherwise would have been, namely a forcible illustration of well-known and undeniable truths, is made to appear as if it were merely an uncalled-for satire or burlesque upon a certain so-called "theosophical" society; a performance which would be perfectly useless and which was never intended; as the affairs of that society do not interest me in the least.

Yours very respectfully,

FRANZ HARTMANN, M. D.

THE TALKING IMAGE OF URUR.

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERY.

HIGH upon the rocks that guard the western coast of the United States against the aggressive waves of the Pacific Ocean, as they roll in through the "Golden Gate," stands the "Cliff-house," a place known to all who have lived in California. There the inhabitants of San Francisco go on hot summer days to enjoy the cool breeze that comes over the watery waste, and strangers from all parts of the globe may be found upon the verandah of the hotel, looking with delight upon the tranquil bay dotted with charming islands, and watching the fishing-boats with their white sails glittering in the sun. Below the railing of the porch, the breakers dash against giant masses of granite that raise from the inky deep their heads, crowned with wreaths of snow-white foam as the spray of the surging waves rises high in the air. At a short distance from the shore, in the midst of the never ceasing turmoil of the infuriated waters, appear two cliffs that have withstood for many centuries the onslaught of the ocean. Upon these cliffs may be seen at all times a great number of seals at play, their bellowing being heard even above the thunder and roaring of the surf.

It was amid these surroundings that one evening, as the sinking sun was colouring the clouds overhead with purple and gold, two persons stood upon the balcony looking over the pandemonium below. One of these was a man about forty years of age; the other a young and graceful lady, evidently of Spanish descent. Pancho—for that was the favourite name by which he was called by the little lady—had the air of a man who had travelled much; he was indeed a cosmopolitan in character. Having lived in many parts of the world, and among different nationalities, he had become acquainted with their habits and learned their various tongues. He had studied the popular sciences, and read a great many books; but he did not believe much in the assertions made by modern authorities. He always wanted to convince himself of the truth of a theory before he was willing to accept it. His master passion was a desire for knowledge, or to express it perhaps more correctly, a desire to gratify his curiosity in regard to the hidden mysteries of nature. He had entered deeply into the study of chemistry and read a great many alchemical books, without, however, discovering the way to prepare the Philosopher's Stone. In the course of time he had accidentally become acquainted with the young and lovely Conchita. Finding her so attractive that he imagined he could not be happy without her, he deliberately proposed, and in due course of time submitted to the irksome ceremony, by means of which two persons of the opposite sex are legally made husband and wife.

Beauty of external form and of character are not always found hand-in-hand; but Conchita possessed both. Her figure was small but exquisitely beautiful, and the raven black colour of her hair formed a strong contrast to the delicate pallor of her skin. Her form was faultless, and her manners exceedingly graceful. She was a beauty of such a rare kind that when she was passing through the streets of the city with her black *mantilla* thrown carelessly over her head and

shoulders, men would stand still and stare, and ladies would cast shy glances at her as if afraid that she would outshine them all in beauty. She was proud, yet not vain ; she knew that she was beautiful, yet was modest and unassuming ; a most bewitching creature. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that Pancho was proud of his wife.

Conchita was born in Guatemala. She had been brought up in one of those Roman Catholic convents where girls vampirize each other because they are never permitted to see a man except their old Father-confessor. Under such circumstances the mind creates phantasies, for there is a longing for the unknown in every human nature, and that which is hidden or far away grows in imaginary value in proportion as it seems to be unattainable. The story of the forbidden fruit being the most palatable is not a fiction, and it was, perhaps, a desire to know the true nature of that mysterious and dangerous animal called "man," which led to Conchita's acquaintance with Pancho soon after she left the convent, and to her subsequent marriage.

Taking the above into consideration, the philosophers have not yet fully agreed whether this marriage was, or was not, the outcome of selfishness ; but our historian thinks that all human actions are due to selfishness in some shape or other, and that an entirely unselfish person, one who has no desire whatever to incite him to action, would be about the most useless thing in the world.

However that may be, it is certain and beyond the possibility of any scientific doubt that Pancho and Conchita lived very happily together. To Pancho it seemed that his wife had no other desire but to please him, and he almost felt his phrenological bump of veneration growing in her presence. She seemed to be fully absorbed in her husband ; but he was not absorbed by her, for man's love is multifarious and vacillating ; it comes from the imagination, while there is nothing more simple, and therefore more firm than the love of a

woman. Her love springs from the heart and goes to the heart, while man's love seldom penetrates below the surface.

Conchita loved her husband above all other things; but Pancho had many *loves* besides his wife. He loved to take aerial flights into the realm of occultism and mysticism; his greatest desire was to lift the veil of Isis and uncover the mysteries of Nature. The planet upon which he lived was not large enough to gratify his curiosity. He desired to know other worlds and other beings than those of this earth; he wished to know the whole of the universe, not that prison-house alone in which he was doomed to live.

- Conchita cared nothing for Occultism, but loved to enjoy that Light which she saw with her physical eyes. She knew nothing about what is called "the supernatural," except that which she had been told by her religious teachers; she imagined that if anything more could be known about it, her Father-confessor, who was a very smart person, would surely have found it out. She believed in God, although she had not the least conception of the meaning of that term, nor of what kind of being this God might be; but Pancho wanted scientific proof of the existence of God before he would make up his mind to believe in His existence. Conchita had an unbounded faith in divine providence and was willing to trust her destiny in the hands of God; Pancho imagined that each person was himself the master of his own destiny, and he required to know all the attributes of God before he would willingly trust himself into His power.

He had in vain studied natural sciences and theology, and consulted the most eminent professors and clergymen, in his search for reasonable proof of the survival of the soul after the death of the body. Doctrines which were positively asserted to be true by the luminaries of the Church, were peremptorily denied and ridiculed by luminaries of science; while both parties based their opposite opinions upon equally plausible and logical grounds. Despairing in his attempts to

find any human authority which could be implicitly trusted, he began to investigate Spiritualism, hoping to find in this new science the solution of such difficult problems. For once fortune seemed to smile upon him. He found opportunities to witness the most astounding phenomena, from common table-tippings up to the levitation of living persons, and from direct writings produced in locked slates up to the full materialization of corporeal forms, seemingly solid human beings, with whom one could talk, who could be touched, and who, nevertheless, dissolved a moment after into thin air, or disappeared through solid walls.

Pancho was in the hey-day of his glory. His longed-for goal was at last attained: he had obtained proof palpable of the immortality of the soul. The spirits of his departed friends and acquaintances had come to him, and spoken about things of the past known to no mortal person, save himself. He received indisputable proof of their identity, not only through professional mediums, but through persons who themselves were disbelievers in Spiritualism. Moreover, he "sat for development" in the solitude of his room and obtained clairvoyant glimpses of various kinds. Once, a beautiful spirit, an angelic being of wondrous loveliness, appeared and told him that she was his spirit-bride, his true affinity, who awaited him with outstretched arms in the bright hereafter, to lead him to her celestial palace, far, far away among the stars.

After a while however it turned out that some of his spiritualistic experiences were of an unsatisfactory character. Not that he had been cheated by fraudulent mediums; but that he saw that some of his cherished spirit communications were not in accordance with truth. He began to doubt whether even his spirit-bride was not the outcome of his own imagination. And thus he became sceptical in regard to the origin of the letters received from those that "were gone before."

The proofs of the unreliability of these "spirit-communications" became more and more abundant as time went on, till at last he became thoroughly dissatisfied with the results of his researches.

It was just at this time that he made the acquaintance of Conchita, and resolved to bid adieu to the inhabitants of the "Summerland," and to learn to know this present life, leaving the hereafter to take care of itself. He married his bride, and, for once in his life, was happy.

But if the craving for the unknown and the mysterious has once awakened within the heart, it is not so easily repressed. Even in his most happy hours, Pancho could not help making silent comparisons between his love in the spirit-world and his terrestrial wife. These were not quite favourable to the latter, as she was, after all, only a woman of flesh and blood, while the former was clothed in an ethereal form. It need hardly be said that he told Conchita nothing about it, for she was of Castilian blood, and would not have suffered any woman, material or spiritual, to come between her and her husband.

As the couple stood upon the balcony, looking down into the surging waters and the bellowing herd of seals that scrambled over the rocks, Pancho mockingly remarked :

"If I were convinced of the truth of the doctrine which teaches the transmigration of souls, I would be ready to believe that these beasts are the reincarnated egos of men coming fresh from the stock exchange. How they push and elbow each other down there, as if buying and selling shares. Now they have exchanged their human for animal forms, but their characters are the same. Formerly all their energies were bent to outwit each other for the purpose of obtaining money ; now each one attempts to push the others down, in order to obtain a standing-place upon the sunny rock. It is the same selfishness acting in them now that was at work before ; it but differs in the form of its manifestation.

Formerly it was a desire for wealth ; now it manifests itself in a more brutal form."

"I should be very unwilling to believe," replied Conchita, "that human souls could desire to return again to this earth once they have departed from it. If I were to go, I should have no desire to return. I would rise above this planet into the region of starlight, and listen to the music of the spheres."

"Intrastellar space," sneered Pancho, "is said to be as dark as pitch, and as there is no air to transmit sound, the music of the spheres, even if there were such, could not be heard."

"Perhaps there may be another kind of light, and another kind of music than that which we know," she said dreamily. "Perhaps the senses of the soul become there more refined and need no material air for the transmission of sound. Heaven is said to be a beautiful place, filled by angels crowned with diamonds, and its streets paved with gold."

"If there were such a super-terrestrial world," answered Pancho, "I should wish to go there and gather some of the rubies and pearls that are said to be so abundant in heaven. I would then bring them back to you. They would look well in your beautiful hair."

"Who knows whether you would return?" said Conchita. "You might meet some angel more pretty than I am on your way, and forget all about me."

"No angel or devil," exclaimed Pancho, "will ever break the bonds by which our souls are united. Even if I were as far away from you as the earth from the moon, I would not forget you. Love acts independently of distance."

Conchita seemed to reflect, and then asked: "Tell me, dear, what is your opinion about the nature of love?"

"Why!" hesitated Pancho, somewhat perplexed what to answer. "The books say that it is a peculiar state of the imagination which causes one to think of a certain object."

"That would probably be imaginary love," replied Conchita; "but I wish to know how you define the real thing."

"The real thing!" repeated Pancho surprised. "I cannot see how love could be a real thing; it is merely a state of something which is called the mind: it is a sentiment by which two beings are attracted towards each other."

Conchita did not seem to be quite satisfied with that reply, for after a pause, during which Pancho reflected about the nature of that thing called the mind, she suddenly asked:

"Do the stars love each other?"

"What a question!" answered Pancho. "Stars are inanimate bodies like our earth. They are composed of chemical substances, the same as we find upon our globe. How can they love each other if they have no consciousness?"

"It seems to me," she went on, "that they must be conscious, for they are attracted towards each other, and if they were unconscious of everything, how could they respond to an attraction from afar? How could that which they are incapable of feeling have any effect upon them?"

"Some German philosophers say that there is no such thing as attraction, but that it is all due to some etheric force which propels from behind; while repulsion is said to be a wedging in of ether particles between two objects. At all events, the interaction seems to be due to some universal substance, and some philosophers say that this substance, or spirit, is an indivisible Unity, but I cannot see how that could be."

A new idea seemed to have been intuitively grasped by Conchita, for she clapped her hands and joyfully exclaimed, "Ah! I know. This spirit is a unity, and it is the same in me as in you. I always feel as if we both were really only one. When I am going away from you it seems to me as if I were going away from myself, and I often imagine that in loving you I am only loving myself. Yes, I am sure we are one. You are Conchita, and I am Pancho!"

Highly rejoicing over her discovery, Conchita broke out into joyous laughter.

"It may be so," seriously answered Pancho; "but in this case all human beings would be one, and you would have to love everybody just as much as you love me; we could then have no individual preferences. But there is something in your individuality which causes me to love you more than any other being. Will that individuality be for ever preserved, or will it, as the Buddhists say, be dissolved in the universal ocean of spirit? This is the great problem which I would wish to have solved."

"Why should you worry about such a problem?" asked his wife. "I believe that, when the time comes that we should know it, the mystery will be solved."

Pancho remained silent.

While carrying on this conversation, the lovers had left the verandah and descended to the beach. The sun had disappeared below the horizon. Dark clouds had gathered, threatening a storm, but the last rays of the sinking orb were fringing the dark masses with silver and gold, with yellow and purple and countless hues, which gradually faded away before the shadows of night.

"How beautiful is the sunset!" exclaimed Conchita, "and how sorry we should be to see its close, did we not know that the sun will rise again to-morrow."

"Thus it is with life," was the answer. "When the day-dream of life comes to an end, then follows the night. It is said that there will be another sunrise for us when we return to the earth in a new incarnation, but what will be our condition during the night? What shall we do between sunset and sunrise?"

"Why, sleep, of course," retorted Conchita. "Sleep, and dream happy dreams."

"This idea of sleeping and dreaming does not at all please me," he said. "A man who sleeps and dreams is not his own

master ; he neither reasons nor thinks. He is like a boat on the water without a helm, helplessly driven hither and thither by the winds and the waves ; they may land him in a beautiful harbour, or dash him against a rock. Who knows where his dreams will take him ? They may raise him up to heaven, or throw him down into the abyss of hell. What I desire is not to dream, but to retain my own reasoning power, and the mastery over my imagination. I have read of Adepts who have accomplished this ; if I knew where to find such men, I would go to them and ask them to teach me their secret. I would discover them, even if I had to go to the end of the world !

“There can be no doubt that such Adepts have once lived, and that they were in the possession of the secret of the Philosopher’s Stone and the true Elixir of Life ; I believe that such men exist even to-day. I have read about the Rosicrucians, who were in the possession of such powers. They had a temple called the *Universal Temple of the Holy Ghost* where they used to meet, and it is said to have stood in some part of Southern Germany. I have hunted all over that country, but I could not find it. They had an ever-burning lamp that must have been constructed according to principles entirely unknown to modern chemistry, and they could call up the Elemental Spirits of nature.”

“There are undoubtedly people who can do very wonderful things,” interrupted Conchita. “There is, for instance, Juana, who can make spirits appear, but she is a very bad girl.”

“Who is Juana ?” asked Pancho.

“A girl from my own country—a very strange girl. She is an Indian, and was captured, when a child, from a tribe of savages in the forests of Guatemala during an attack which the soldiers made upon the Indian camp. She was given into the charge of a sea captain, who afterwards gave her to me because I understood a little of her language. I have attempted to give her an education, but while she is full of tricks, she does

not seem capable of learning anything useful. She can foretell events by looking into a glass of water, and her prophecies usually come true ; but she can also do a great deal of mischief. The neighbours are afraid of her and believe her to be a witch. I once caught her sticking needles into an image of wax representing a person who was then very sick. That person died, and people said that Juana had killed her by her malefice. However, this could not be proved. She caused so much trouble that I had to send her away, and she is now with a woman that used to be a servant in our family."

"I have read a great deal about witches," said Pancho, "and I have always wished to find an opportunity to investigate such phenomena. I hope you will introduce me without delay to your precious Juana."

"Take my advice," answered his wife, "and do not seek to become acquainted with her. I am sure that nothing good will result from such experiments."

"I am not afraid of her spells," he proudly replied. "I am strong enough to resist them. I dare even the devil, and why should I fear Juana's powers if I can, thereby, learn something new ? Let us go to her !"

"Your wish is a command to me," answered Conchita. "The place where she lives is not far out of our way ; we will visit her as we return."

To this proposal Pancho readily consented. They returned to the city by carriage, and neither spoke much during the trip, for Pancho's thoughts were occupied with the stories which he had read of the Rosicrucians, and Conchita felt that she had committed an imprudence in speaking about Juana. It seemed as if, already, a foreboding cloud had settled upon the two lovers.

It was already dark when they entered the city. Alighting, they dismissed the carriage and walked the rest of the way, which led up one of the steep hills upon which San Francisco is built. Turning a corner, they saw an old Catholic cathedral,

whose door stood ajar, and whose interior was dimly illuminated. Conchita asked her husband to enter the church with her.

For a moment Pancho hesitated. He was no friend of churches, priestcraft or pious mummeries. He had not visited a church for years, and did not desire to enter one now. Nevertheless, he followed Conchita as she went into the building. Was it, perhaps, that he did not wish to displease his young wife by refusing to submit to her whim, or was it because even our most fanatical rationalists prefer to see their wives pious than over sceptical? For an arguing and incredulous woman loses much of the charm that characterizes her sex, and a wife who knows too much to believe in religion is likely also to be alert enough to mistrust her husband.

Thus he consented at last to enter the church, which at that hour was deserted. Arm in arm they walked down the aisle towards the altar, and it seemed to Pancho as if the wooden images of the saints posted along the walls were scowling at him reproachfully, as if surprised to see a heretic in their midst. Having arrived at the foot of the altar, Conchita sank down upon her knees and prayed silently, while Pancho stood in the background contemplating the picture.

It was a grand old cathedral, built in magnificent style. If Pancho had understood the symbolical meaning contained in stones, the architecture of that church might have told him more truths than all the sermons that had ever been preached in its pulpit; for the high pillars, massive and solid at their base, spoke of firmness and solidity of character, while the soft lines in which the arches curved upwards to the roof spoke of the aspiration of the soul towards the Unattainable and the Infinite.

The church was nearly dark, but through the stained glass of the high-arched window to the right, a ray of light from a lamp in the vicinity of the building crept in, and falling upon Conchita's veil surrounded her head with a halo like that of a saint.

As the husband watched his wife, she appeared to him a glorified being, and her presence seemed to fill the whole of the building with some invisible but living and substantial power, perhaps of the same kind as that which must have existed in the Rosicrucian temple in the South of Germany. It seemed to him as if a supernatural golden and rosy light radiated from her form, and entering his being sought to kindle within his heart an inextinguishable flame of a nature unknown to modern chemistry. He felt the ennobling influence of Conchita's soul, which seemed to lift him up on the wings of her own aspirations, and he wondered that such a spiritual being should have united her fate to his own. Perhaps it was the exalted state of Conchita's imagination that caused him to feel a corresponding vibration within himself, and he began to think that love was more than a mere emotion ; that it was a real power. He felt some inexplicable influence penetrating him, and it took the whole strength of his rationalistic reasoning to resist the impulse to kneel down by the side of his wife and worship with her ; a thing which would evidently have been very preposterous, an unpardonable weakness of which he certainly would have been very much ashamed hereafter.

Conchita arose, and smiled sweetly as she looked into the eyes of her husband.

A heavenly peace seemed to rest upon her soul, while Pancho's mind was a battle-ground of contradictory thoughts and opposite emotions, whose nature and origin he could not well explain

CHAPTER II.

JUANA.

THE two lovers, after leaving the old cathedral, continued their way, and soon entered the Chinese quarter of the city. The shops were lighted with gas, and crowds of people thronged the streets, while in the by-ways and alleys, females of doubtful character, looking hungry, defiant and greedy, were lurking. The great majority of the people were Chinese; from the well-to-do merchant in a silk robe down to the pale and ragged wretches that live in underground holes and subterranean passages, in continual warfare with the police. The nauseous odour of fish and garlic that pervaded the streets was by no means inviting, and our hero and heroine quickened their step to escape to the purer regions higher up on the hill-side. Soon they reached a part of the city where the streets became more quiet, and at last they stopped in front of a gate leading into a small garden, in the midst of which, surrounded by bushes of jessamine and oleander, stood a small one-story cottage.

Pancho pushed the gate open. In doing so he found it obstructed by something which proved to be the carcase of a dog, lying stiff and with its head thrown backwards, as if it had died of *tetanus*.

"This is Mrs. Wells's pet poodle," cried Conchita. "It seems as though it had been poisoned."

They rang the bell and, the door being soon opened, Mrs. Wells appeared upon the threshold. She was a woman of about sixty years, in a white frilled cap. The lamp she carried was held up high to enable her to scrutinize the newcomers. Her face brightened up when she recognized Conchita.

"Bless me!" she exclaimed. "What good luck brings my darling here to-night? Please walk in."

They entered, and Pancho was introduced to Mrs. Wells. The latter expressed herself delighted, and declared that this was indeed a fortunate ending to a most unfortunate day.

"How so?" asked Conchita. "Has anything disagreeable happened to you to-day?"

"Lots of disagreeable things have happened," replied Mrs. Wells. "Mr. Hagard the landlord had long ago promised to have these rooms newly papered, but as he never did it, and the hangings were falling down from the walls, I could stand it no longer. So I took a few dollars which I had saved up, bought some paper myself, and hired a paper-hanger. But when the landlord heard that the rooms had been repaired, he came in and said, that the house was now worth a great deal more rent, and that he supposed I could now afford to pay him twenty dollars a month instead of eighteen as heretofore. I argued with him and told him that God would surely punish him for his avarice; but he said that he would not compel me to pay more, and if I did not wish to do so, I was at liberty to move out, if I liked. What shall I do now? I am a poor woman, and Mr. Hagard is a wealthy man. He owns two blocks of houses and has millions of money; yet he will not live in a decent room himself, but sleeps in a loft over one of his stables, and climbs into it at night by means of a ladder."

"He is very much to be pitied," remarked Conchita; "but has any other misfortune happened?"

"Nothing worth mentioning," answered Mrs. Wells. "Only Juana has been very wicked. She played with Tommy and let him smell a bone, and when the dog snapped at it, she pulled it away. At last Tommy got hold of the bone, and then she snatched it away from him and he grew excited and bit her. This made her so furious, that I had to let the dog out, for Juana would surely have torn him to pieces!"

"The bite does not seem to have agreed with the dog anyhow," put in Pancho, who thereupon informed Mrs. Wells of having seen the poodle lying dead at the gate. They both went out and brought the body of the dog into the cottage. Mrs. Wells, who was very much grieved at the death of her favourite, said she was certain this was Juana's doing.

"Where did she get the poison?" asked Pancho.

"That girl requires no poison," answered the aggrieved woman. "She is poison enough herself. I shall be glad when she gets out of this house. She wishes to go back to Central America, and the sooner we send her back the better it will be for all of us. She will never be fit to live in a civilized country."

Entering the kitchen, adjoining which was the chamber of Juana, our friends found a dark-coloured Indian girl with sharply defined features not altogether devoid of beauty. Her long black hair hung in disorder over her narrow forehead and her shoulders, as she sat in front of the grate, looking at the glimmering ashes, while a malicious smile played around her lips. It would have been somewhat difficult to estimate her age, which might have been fourteen or twenty-four; but it seemed as though her young body was inhabited by an aged soul. She was partly undressed, wearing a dark-blue skirt and a chequered shawl that but half concealed her form.

At the time when Juana was picked up from the battle field, she was already old enough to be impressed with its horrors. A company of government soldiers had killed

nearly all of the tribe to which she belonged ; but the officer in command had spared her life and taken her home to his family. Soon after that the officer was himself killed, and she was taken in charge by a sea captain who employed her as a servant and brought her with him to the United States, where she was found by Conchita, and ultimately placed with Mrs. Wells. Juana had never forgotten the injury inflicted upon her people by the white race, and her heart was full of revenge. She seemed to hate everybody without discrimination, Conchita perhaps excepted ; for the latter had been very kind to her and could converse with her in her Indian dialect. Moreover Conchita had promised to send her back to her own country, and she was very anxious to return, dreaming perchance of future greatness and even of becoming the queen of her tribe.

If she had any magic powers, it had never been ascertained how she acquired them. It is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that she learned their use intuitively, having perhaps practised them in some previous incarnation ; for it is said that though the details of some such previous existence may be entirely forgotten, the instincts and talents developed will remain unchanged by death and be ready to manifest themselves in constant increase in each successive existence.

Conchita explained to Juana the object of her visit, and asked her to show Pancho some proof of her art. After a long discussion, Juana finally consented. Looking at Pancho's hand, she said : "This man can see himself ; he does not need my eyes."

She then took a goblet, and, filling it with water, uttered some words in a foreign tongue ; at last she breathed upon it, and bade Pancho look, who did as directed. The surface of the water appeared at first as clear as crystal, but gradually it seemed to become covered with a film. An image formed itself upon the film as on a mirror, and became more and more distinct, until finally Pancho beheld in it a life-like representa-

tion of an event that had taken place in his earlier life. It represented the dying scene of a friend who had many years ago committed suicide on account of some disappointment. All the persons who were then present, Pancho included, were represented in every detail with the greatest exactness. Pancho had never spoken to any one of this affair; in fact, he had tried to erase it from his own memory. But there was another remarkable feature about that picture; for besides the persons standing around the bed of the dying man, there were other beings which seemed invisible to the former; grinning Elementals of ludicrous and yet horrible shapes, awaiting apparently the parting of the soul and body. The dying man alone seemed to see them, although he could not speak. It was this that gave to his face that expression of horror which Pancho remembered only too well.

"Well done, my little devil!" exclaimed Pancho. "The image of the past has been correctly recorded. Now let us look at the future."

Juana grinned and nodded assent. Pancho looked again, and now the face of a saint appeared upon the surface. It was a face bearing an expression of dignity, sanctity, and superhuman intelligence. But gradually the features underwent a change; they became distorted, and after a while there stood in the place of the saint the image of a clown, staring at Pancho. It slowly faded away.

"What does this mean?" asked Pancho.

"I do not know," was Juana's answer.

Further attempts to obtain any phenomena proved useless, but Pancho was so much pleased with what he had seen that he proposed to have arrangements made immediately for Juana to come and live at his house. Conchita was evidently none too pleased with this idea; but being accustomed to agree with all her husband's wishes, and perhaps also desiring to relieve Mrs. Wells of the troublesome Indian girl, she gave her consent. As to Juana, she seemed absolutely indifferent as

to whether she was to go or to remain. So it was agreed that a room should be prepared for her the next day at their residence.

While Conchita and Mrs. Wells were talking over the subject, Pancho happened to look toward the kitchen window, and saw plainly the face of a man peering through one of the panes. It was an ugly face, with a brutal expression on it—the face of a man of about fifty years of age. This was all that Pancho could see, for the figure disappeared the moment its eyes caught his glance; and when he went to the window, he could see nothing but the darkness beyond. He thought that it might have been a phantom produced by his own imagination, and then concluded to say nothing of it, thinking it useless to alarm Mrs. Wells.

The husband and wife took their leave, and as they walked homeward an interior feeling told Pancho that he had acted inconsiderately in proposing to take care of Juana. He asked Conchita what she thought in regard to this matter.

"Juana is a malicious creature," answered Conchita, "but I do not believe she will attempt to do any harm, for I have always been very friendly to her."

"I expect great scientific results from our experiments with that girl," continued Pancho. "Science has now arrived at the utmost limits of all that can possibly be known in regard to physical forces, and if we wish to know anything more we must enter the field of Magic and Sorcery. The mediums of the Spiritualists are almost useless for our investigations; they do not know the cause of the phenomena which take place through their instrumentality. But those rare and exceptional individuals who understand the nature of these mysterious powers, and can produce phenomena at will, ought to be regarded as the greatest treasures of science. In the past such science used to slay its possessors. The science of the future, recognizing their value, will build them palaces and surround them with every comfort. Then, and only then,

will it be possible to study those higher sciences which deal with the living forces of nature. Persons possessing such powers ought to be treated like the vestal priestesses of the ancient oracles. They ought to be kept away from contact with the vulgar and the ignorant, and not be exposed to any deleterious mental influences. They ought to be surrounded with the most favourable conditions to develop their powers and to use them for the benefit of humanity. Thus we might establish schools of Occultism all over the country, and come again into possession of the science which belonged to the ancient Rosicrucians and which has been lost on account of the ignorance of those who were in power during the Dark Ages. Thus shall we gain the power to chain the Elemental spirits of Nature to the car of science. We shall engage them to carry our letters in the twinkling of an eye from one part of the globe to another, and to give us correct information of what takes place in the bowels of the earth and the highest regions of the sky. We shall rediscover the art of making gold and silver, pearls and precious stones, by artificial means ; of rendering ourselves invisible, and of prolonging our lives to an indefinite period until at last we grow tired of walking the earth like the Wandering Jew, and voluntarily retire for a period of repose."

"Do you believe that there ever were any persons who possessed such powers?" quietly asked Conchita.

"Do I believe it?" exclaimed Pancho. "I am just as certain of it as I am of my own existence. The historical accounts of the wonders performed by the Rosicrucians and Alchemists cannot be mere lies and inventions ; and we read in the works of Theophrastus Paracelsus that even an ordinary occultist must be able to take down the moon from the sky and to put it into a bath of water ; a feat only paralleled by that of Joshua, mentioned in the Bible. Do you not believe, yourself, that during the mass an ordinary wafer is transformed into the flesh and blood of Christ ? Why then should

it be impossible to make gold out of mercury! But we will not enter into these subjects; they are too new and strange to be believed by any one who is an entire stranger to occult science. If you doubt them, please remember that Moses made water run out of a rock by touching it with a stick, and that he was able to transform his staff into a snake."

"I do not doubt that such things can be done," answered Conchita. "I have seen Kellar perform just such wonderful things. I saw him make real hot coffee out of shavings and milk out of sawdust, while he transformed cotton into pieces of sugar. You remember also that he made a rosebush grow from a piece of wood; and its roses were no hallucination, for he gave me a rose and I took it home with me."

"Yes, I know," answered Pancho. "He is a very clever performer; but these things are all done by tricks. What I want to know is how to perform the genuine thing."

"Oh, that would be charming!" exclaimed Conchita. "Please learn all about it, and then we can give an evening entertainment. How surprised Mrs. Wells would be if we could make her poodle come back to life; and then if we could make gold we could buy that little cottage from Mr. Hagard and give it to her, so that she would not have to worry about the rent, poor soul!"

"These are mere trifles," answered Pancho. "If I knew how to employ the elemental powers of nature, I would do far more important things. It is said that if we had faith only as a mustard seed, we should be able to remove mountains. I want to find out what is meant by that expression 'faith.' I have reason to suppose that it refers to some talisman, and if I can get possession of it I will make short work with the canal of Panama. I will level the Rocky Mountains and transform Nebraska into a paradise."

Conchita looked surprised. It seemed as if she began to doubt the sanity of her husband.

"You need not be surprised," continued Pancho. "Such

things are not impossible, and I have the key to it already in my possession. Schopenhauer says : ‘ *The world is the product of my imagination.*’ If I can change my imagination, then I can change the world.”

“The best thing,” said Conchita, “would be to see Mr. Schopenhauer and ask him to change his imagination a little ; for it seems necessary that some changes should be made. Where does he live ?”

“Mr. Schopenhauer is dead,” answered Pancho ; “but I see that you do not understand these things. I will explain them to you by and by.”

During these discourses our friends reached their home, and we will now return to Mrs Wells and see what Juana is doing. We find her still sitting in front of the grate, and upon the mantelpiece there burns a piece of a candle. She looks at the light and, in a subdued voice, sings a song in her native language ; and while she sings the flame rises several inches in the air and sinks down again, its motions keeping beat with the melody. Presently a rap is heard and Juana rises. She blows out the light and opens the window.

When Pancho thought that the face which he saw peering through the window-pane was an apparition attracted by influences that surrounded Juana, he was not far from the truth ; for the face belonged to Hagar, the miserly landlord, who for some time past had been in the habit of paying nightly visits to the Indian girl. He had come on his visit to Juana, but ran away when he saw himself observed by Pancho. Now the coast was clear and he returned.

“Who are those people that were here to-night ?” he asked.

“Wouldn’t you like to know ?” tauntingly answered Juana. “Has the lady with the black eyes found favour with you ? Well ! Such fish are not for you to catch. You are too ugly for her. It would take stronger powers than mine to make her fall in love with such an ape as you.”

“But who is she ?” asked Hagar.

"I will not tell you," answered Juana.

"Suppose I pay you for telling me?" asked Hagard, drawing a gold piece out of his pocket. "Refuse to tell me, I will ask Mrs. Wells."

"Let me see," said Juana, taking the gold piece, which she smelt and then hid away. "The lady is from my own country, and I am going to live with her. This is your last visit. You will see me no more."

"Can you not find means to make me acquainted with her?"

"It would not be advisable for you to exhibit your carcass at her house as long as her husband is there," sneered Juana.

"Can you not get the puppy out of the way?" asked Mr. Hagard.

"That would not improve your bad looks," answered the girl.

"Don't talk to me in that way, I know well that you are a witch. You can do anything, if you only use your powers."

"If I should ever use them again for you, it would cost you more money than you are willing to pay," answered Juana. "You are always so poor! You cannot afford to pay anything."

"And you are always so greedy," said the man. "Why don't you get some of your devils to discover a hidden treasure or a gold mine? I am willing to pay the expenses and to share the profits with you."

"If I were to get the devil to do such a thing," answered Juana, "there would be the devil to pay, and you cannot be trusted, for you are sly enough to cheat even the devil out of his dues."

"Now, do talk sense," replied the man, "I want you to assist me in this affair. That woman with the black eyes is just the kind of fish that suits my fancy, and I must have her, even if I had to strangle that knave of a husband and

marry her. As to the financial part of the business, I will arrange that with you in a satisfactory manner."

"I am not used to live on promises," answered Juana. "Before I do anything for you, I must have the cash in my pocket. It may be that I can put my will into her and make her like you in spite of your looks; but then you will not have her own self: you will only have a part of *me* in her body."

"If I only get her," he muttered, "it will make little difference to me whose will is inside her. I shall find means to make her do *my own will*."

"But it will make a great deal of difference to her," replied Juana. "You know what were the consequences to the man who shot President Garfield, of letting the will of other people control his mind?"

"I don't care. You do the job and I will pay the money. I will take charge of the consequences."

"I will think the matter over, and let you know if there is any chance. But now I want you to leave. I am tired and sleepy."

"You are a queer girl," he said, hesitatingly; "but all right. Good-bye!" So saying, Mr. Hagard departed and Juana retired to bed.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHELA.

A FEW days after the events described in the preceding chapter, the following appeared in the *San Francisco Eagle* :—

“TRUTH STRANGER THAN FICTION!

“A MIRACLE WORKER FROM AFRICA!!

“AN INTERVIEW WITH THE CHELA OF AN ADEPT!!!

“DISCLOSURES IN REGARD TO THE MYSTERIOUS BROTHERHOOD!!!!

“Yesterday a special reporter of the *Eagle* was fortunate enough to be admitted into the presence of a highly distinguished stranger from Africa, a *genuine Chela*, that is to say, a disciple of a *Mysterious Brotherhood of Adepts*, living in the most inaccessible regions of a desert in the Interior of Africa.

“What he tells about his wonderful personal experiences is truly astonishing and would surpass belief, if he were not a gentleman of *indubitable veracity*, of acknowledged ability, and a person of high social standing, having at one time occupied the official position of an honoured personal assistant to one of the most eminent chieftains of Africa; besides being a member of several well-known Secret Societies.

"But let us begin at the beginning. Information reached this office yesterday that Mr. Joachim Puffer, formerly an officer in the employ of *King Molobolo*, but who had sacrificed his official position for the purpose of *benefiting humanity*, and taken up the *life of an ascetic*, had arrived at this city, and was stopping at the Grand Hotel. A special reporter was, therefore, immediately despatched to that place, and gained admittance after the noble stranger's dinner.

"Mr. Puffer, A.B., M.B.L., etc., is a man about forty years of age, stout, with a rubicund face, small eyes and blonde hair, and of *aristocratic bearing*. His hair is very long, and he wears side whiskers, but no moustache. He was dressed in a checkered suit of grey with black stripes, patent leather boots, a high collar and a blue necktie. He is of noble family, one of his ancestors having been gentleman of the chamber to a king. He is a strict vegetarian and takes alcohol in no shape. His revelations in regard to the mysterious Brotherhood are truly wonderful, and from what he said to our reporter, we gather the following:—

"For thousands of years the heads of the scientists have been puzzled to find out *what causes the world to move*. Some thought that it was the law of gravitation, and others imagined that it was magnetism; but it is evident that such absurd theories offer no explanation of the mystery. Mr. Puffer now assures us that the motion of the earth around its axis is due to the supernatural and miraculous powers possessed by a body of Adepts who live in a desert in Africa, in the exact geographical centre of the surface of this planet. By the united effort of their combined and concentrated will-power they can produce the most astonishing effects not only in the atmosphere of this earth, but also in the body of the sun. The proof of this assertion may be seen in the sun spots, a phenomenon well known to our astronomers, and which may easily be explained by the fact that the Adepts are *supplying the sun with electricity, to keep its photosphere clear*.

If these Adepts neglect their business, the disk of the sun becomes as full of mouldy spots as a cheese. If they were to stop for one moment exercising their will-power, the sun would become as dark as a crow, and *the earth would cease to move*. Besides having this almost incredible power, the Adepts are able to perform the most astonishing feats, which leave those of Robert Houdin, Bosco and Kellar far in the shade. They can eat live snakes, swallow fire and swords, and make a genuine mango tree grow out of a pine board. If they wished to do so, they could transform all the old iron in the United States into masses of pure gold and cause potatoes to rain in Ireland. They could change the Mississippi river into old Bourbon whisky, and all the sand of Galveston Island into wheat. Our reporter asked Mr. Puffer how it came that there were occasionally famines in Africa if the Adepts had the power to do such things. Mr. Puffer replied that he had presented this matter to their consideration, but that the Adepts had no time to attend to such trifling matters, as their number was small and it was all they could do to *keep the world going*. They had something more important to do than to satisfy the greed of the paupers. They could, he said, travel about in their invisible astral bodies and see what is going on in the most private places; for they could pass through roofs without injuring the tiles, and walls were no obstacle to them. They were experts in thought-reading, and could hypnotize people against their will, making them do as they liked. They could guide the thoughts of the people as easily as a coachman guides his horse, and they could cause anybody to become elected *President of the United States* if they were to take him under their patronage. These Adepts, of which Mr. Puffer, by a concatenation of fortunate circumstances, has become an *accepted Chela*, are in possession of untold wealth; and it is said that even the roofs of the houses in which they live are made of pure gold and set with rubies and diamonds, and they are not smoking any other but *genuine Havana*

cigars. Our reporter asked Mr. Puffer how these Adepts acquired their power, but this Mr. Puffer was *not permitted to tell.*

"It will be impossible to present to our readers in this necessarily short article all the ingenious and lucid explanations given by Mr. Puffer in regard to the secrets of the Lunar Brotherhood; but we cannot close without speaking of the most important secret in their possession. It is nothing less than a *Talking Image*, that is to say, a *living piece of statuary* which gives answers orally or in writing to anything a person may ask, the answers always proving to be correct. Our reporter offered to the Chela *a hundred dollars* if he would get him the correct numbers that would come out at the next drawing of the *Havana Lottery*; but we must do Mr. Puffer the justice to say that he indignantly refused the offer, stating that financial considerations were not the objects of the Adepts; that *he knew the numbers, but was not permitted to tell them, as his only object was to benefit humanity.* This noble answer of Mr. Puffer, in whom we behold a future Adept, may be regarded as a sufficient proof of his sincerity."

When Pancho finished reading this article, he did not know whether to laugh or to feel indignant at the stupidity of the reporter, who had evidently travestied and misrepresented great truths. "Mysteries of this kind," he said, "should be kept sacred and not be bawled about in the streets, or made an object of public gossip by the vulgar." But on further consideration he saw that if it had not been for that article in the *Eagle*, he himself would have remained ignorant of the august presence of the Chela. He was very anxious to see him in order to obtain further information in regard to the Brotherhood. This thought reconciled him to the indiscretions of the reporter, and he made up his mind to see Mr. Puffer that very evening.

Accordingly, Pancho went to the Grand Hotel, where he

found the people in great consternation and the fire-brigade just leaving the house. The cause of the confusion was that an explosion had taken place in Mr. Puffer's room, by which some of the furniture had been destroyed, and the chambermaid injured. It appeared that Mr. Puffer had left the room after the gas was lighted, and being either not conversant with modern inventions, on account of his long absence in Africa, or in a state of mental abstraction, he had blown out the gas instead of turning the tap. Soon afterwards the chambermaid had entered and attempted to relight the gas, when the accident happened.

While the servants were engaged in removing the broken furniture, Mr. Puffer returned. After he had been made to realize what had happened he began to curse most fearfully, and swore that the mischief was due to the work of a black magician who was persecuting him and seeking to destroy him. He would, indeed, have killed him long ago, if it had not been for the protection of the Adepts, who were always watching over him. Moreover, he said that gas-pipes and such things belonged to mundane illusions and that he had no time to attend to such trifles while engaged in meditating about the nature of Parabrahm.

He was given another room and Pancho introduced himself, stating his object, which was to obtain more light in regard to the Occult Brotherhood.

"I am entirely at your service," said Mr. Puffer. "It will give me the greatest pleasure to give you all the information you may desire in regard to the subject of the Great Hierophant and Adepts of Africa. The Society for the Distribution of Wisdom is not one of those abominable sects or modern secret societies that seek to mystify the public. Every honest inquirer is entitled to be informed of all we know. All we demand is an open investigation, and we are not afraid of any criticism, however severe. All we want is the truth, the unadulterated truth."

"I understand that you are a Chela of the Lunar Adepts?" asked Pancho.

"I am, sir! I am!" answered Mr. Puffer. "I am a Chela of one of the greatest Adepts that ever existed, a man whose knowledge is without limits and who can tell me anything I want to know, as soon as I put myself in mental rapport with him. He could annihilate you in a moment, if I were to ask him to do so."

"Have you ever seen the great Hierophant in Africa, personally?"

"Did I ever see Captain Bumpkins? Why! He and I are like twin-brothers, we have served together under King Molobolo."

"Are you then actually sure that the Brothers exist?" asked Pancho.

"Do the Brothers exist?" exclaimed Mr. Puffer. "Why! I tell you, my dear sir, there is nothing more true and indisputable than that they exist. See this handkerchief, I obtained it myself directly from one of the Brothers in my own room." So saying, Mr. Puffer showed Pancho a cambric handkerchief, which, however, bore no internal evidence of having come from an Adept rather than from any store.

"This handkerchief," continued Mr. Puffer, "is palpable and indubitable evidence that the Brothers exist, and nobody but a villainous sceptic, an inveterate liar, a benighted simpleton, or an incurable maniac, would deny their existence after seeing *this* handkerchief."

"I am not a doubter," said Pancho. "I have read of great Adepts in India who can do most wonderful things."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Mr. Puffer contemptuously. "Do not talk to me about such trifles. They can at best mend an old broken coffee-pot; they cannot be compared with our Lunar Adepts. Tell me, have you at present even the faintest conception of the solemnity of this occasion? Do you know in whose presence you stand? Would you dare to deny the existence

of the Lunar Adepts, and run the risk of being immediately annihilated by them as a punishment for your scepticism? Let the consequences of him who doubts the powers of the Lunar Adepts come upon his own head! Om! Satwa! Wariaki! Starambo!

Upon this declaration Pancho did not consider it advisable to appear too inquisitive. He therefore confessed to be satisfied with the proof advanced, and asked Mr. Puffer whether he would be so kind as to introduce him to an Adept.

"That depends on certain circumstances," said Mr. Puffer. "First of all you would have to become a member of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom, in order to attract the attention of the Brothers."

"What kind of a thing is this Society for the Distribution of Wisdom?" asked Pancho.

"The S. D. W.," answered Mr. Puffer, "is a society which is based upon the principle of universal tolerance and mutual admiration. We allow every one of our members to think, and believe, and to teach whatever he pleases. Knave, fool and purblind sectarian is he who should dare to say anything against our Society or against any of the officers or persons connected with it. He who dares to doubt the reliability of the source of our inspiration is a coward, or a poisonous reptile which ought to be exterminated from the face of the earth."

"I should consider myself extremely fortunate to become a member of your society and to attract the attention of the Adepts," said Pancho.

"That is easy enough," replied Mr. Puffer. "All you have to do is to get a diploma from Captain Bumpkins. I will manage the matter for you."

"I am infinitely obliged to you," said Pancho, "But, to tell you the truth, I should like to look a little deeper into this business. I am very much interested in Occultism and I should like to become a Chela like yourself."

"Ah!" said Mr. Puffer. "That is quite another affair and

rather difficult. You will have to get a Master, whose orders you must implicitly obey, whatever these orders may be, and you may not even know who that master is; for his orders will be communicated to you through Chelas or through the Talking Image."

"It is just this mysterious way of doing things that is most attractive to me," replied Pancho. "I do not think that they will ask anything unreasonable."

"Then you will have to swear a solemn oath," continued Mr. Puffer, "always to obey implicitly all the instructions given to you by a Chela as supposed to be coming from an unknown superior. Whatever your private opinions may be, you must hold up our views before the world and give all your time, money and labour gratuitously to the support of the S. D. W. You will swear that if any one should object to any opinion offered by Captain Bumpkins, or any other member of our society, you will not listen to it, but support our views on every occasion."

"I am willing to swear to anything you like," answered Pancho, "if I can gain my object; because I have full confidence in your honesty."

"You seem to have the qualifications necessary for a Chela," continued Mr. Puffer, "and I think you might go to Africa to make the trial. At all events you may write a letter to Captain Bumpkins, to see whether you will be accepted."

At these words Pancho was very much delighted; but being very impatient to know whether or not he would be accepted, he asked Mr. Puffer whether he could not find out immediately by his own mystic powers, whether his offer would be favourably received. To this Mr. Puffer answered:

"It is a serious matter to ask the Brothers such questions; because they always get angry when we bother them with personal affairs; but in this case I will make an exception. There is a Lunar Brother just now here in the room and I will put myself in mental rapport with him."

Mr. Puffer then went into a trance state, as might have been supposed from the contortions of his face, and he then said :

"There is a mysterious Brother now standing in that corner behind the stove, and he says that as you are not a married man, you may be accepted."

"The Brother is mistaken," said Pancho ; "for I am married."

"Impossible !" exclaimed Mr. Puffer. "They never make a mistake."

"Excuse me, sir," replied Pancho ; "I must know best. I am married to one of the loveliest ladies in the world."

"It is a pity that you imagine such a thing," said Mr. Puffer ; "for a man of your capabilities could spend his time better than in dancing attendance upon a woman. Fortunately you are not married ; for the Brother says, that your supposed marriage is not a true marriage of the soul, and that your wife is not your real affinity."

"I have already suspected as much," murmured Pancho.

"Such a marriage," continued Mr. Puffer, "is a sham, and ought to be discontinued at once. Leave that woman and go to Urur. Why will you cling to an illusion instead of seeking for the truth ?"

"The truth is," said Pancho, "that I love my wife very much, and do not wish to be separated from her."

"Such a love is beastly !" exclaimed the Chela. "It is merely an animal instinct, and you must get rid of it at once. You cannot become a Chela and be initiated into the mysteries of the Brotherhood as long as you have a woman on the brain."

"I do not think," remarked Pancho, "that my love to my wife is of that beastly character which you describe, and moreover I think it would be wrong to leave her without any cause."

"Vain sophistry ! A cause can easily be found. It is not

cause enough if you desire to study the higher science and enter the higher life? Is it not lawful to sacrifice everything, if one is in pursuit of the truth? Lord Buddha himself left his beloved wife and child, his kingdom and palace, and went into a wilderness. Where would the world be to-day if Buddha had remained a henpecked husband instead of becoming a Sage?"

"I am not prepared to criticise the doings of a Buddha," said Pancho.

"The Christian religion teaches the same thing," continued Mr. Puffer. "Jesus said that those who wish to follow Him, must leave father and mother and wife, or words to that effect. I have read the story of a Catholic saint, a woman, who gave her father a thrashing and left her mother uncared for upon a dying bed. She ran away from home and went into a convent, preferring to become a bride of Jesus to meddling with mundane affairs."

"I think that woman was a devil," said Pancho very indignantly.

"What an illogical conclusion! If she had been a devil, she could not have become a saint."

Pancho paused a while and then suddenly asked, "Could I not take my wife with me to Urur?"

"Horror!" exclaimed Mr. Puffer. "Take a wife with you to Urur! Put a good-looking woman in the midst of the Chelas! Would you dare to introduce a roaring lion among the lambs? Would you put a hawk into a cage of turtle-doves? Would you arouse again the passions which the Chelas have put to sleep after a herculean labour? No, young man! The sight of a beautiful woman would drag them again down into the sphere of sensuality and rob them of that virtue which they have already attained."

"These Chelas must be very sensitive fellows; nevertheless my conscience tells me that it would be very wrong for me to separate from my wife."

"Now you do talk most terrible nonsense!" impatiently replied Mr. Puffer. "That which you call conscience is in this case the voice of some vile Elemental, that seeks to divert you from your purpose. These ethereal animals are always ready to persuade us that we are right in the gratification of our selfish desires."

"But is not the desire to become a Chela selfish?" asked Pancho.

"How can you call that selfish, if a person seeks to obtain wisdom?" asked Mr. Puffer. "Read, if you please, the books of the smartest German philosophers, and you will find that such a *transcendental selfishness* is highly laudable and praiseworthy. What would become of human progress, if men were always satisfied with what they had, and desired nothing better?"

"Do you know what is love?" asked Pancho.

"You bet!" exclaimed Mr. Puffer. "When I was young, I used to run after the girls; but since I have become a Chela, I have all the ladies run after me; but I laugh at them. I want to have nothing to do with women; they are the arch enemies of the occultist, and the higher kind of phenomena, such as disembowelling oneself or to have oneself buried alive, can never be successfully done in the presence of a woman; because they attract too much of a man's magnetism. Do not talk to me about women. They are despicable creatures."

When Pancho heard these words he became very indignant and said:

"I do not propose to disembowel myself nor to have myself buried alive. Your fakirs seem to me stupid and ignorant fools. I never saw a person who was a woman hater, unless he was a self-conceited coward and a sensualist of the lowest kind."

"You can think as you like," said Mr. Puffer, "for our Society tolerates all kinds of opinions; but it is a shame that you will let your talents go to rot on account of a woman."

If you have once become an Adept you will be able to make Elementals appear before you in any shape you like ; even in that of the most beautiful princess that exists in the world."

"I should like very much to know how that is done," said Pancho.

"If you have once been taught the necessary conjurations and formulas, it will be the easiest thing in the world," replied Mr. Puffer ; "but of course I am not permitted to tell you these things at present. They are only divulged to the members of our Society. You had better write your application for Chelaship and I will send it to the Hierophant."

"I will consider the matter. But please tell me what kind of a thing is the Talking Image?"

"You will have to go and see it yourself ; it cannot be described. I have never seen it myself. But people say that it looks like a statue, and does not move, but inside it is alive, and it can speak. Moreover, if you place a piece of paper in its vicinity, it will write or precipitate messages upon it, and all this is done by the Mysterious Brotherhood."

"I wonder how this is done?" said Pancho reflectively.

"It is easy enough to explain. You know that the Adepts can pass through the most solid walls, nor are skin and bones any obstacles to them. Some one of the Brothers, or a more advanced Chela, gets hold of the brain of the Image, and, so to say, winds up the machinery, and then the thing works, and spells out whatever they like. There is always one or more of the Magicians engaged in working the Image."

"This is very strange!" exclaimed Pancho. "How did you get such a curiosity?"

"It was manufactured through magic spells by the Brothers expressly for the purpose of communicating with the world. They gave it to the Hierophant, who placed it in the sacred shrine at Urur."

"Such a marvel alone would be worth the trouble of going to Africa to see it," said Pancho. "I have read of talking

images that were in possession of the ancient Egyptians, but I thought they could only grunt or make a noise; I had no idea that they could talk sense."

"When you once become an accepted Chela you will know still more wonderful things."

"I hope to be accepted," said Pancho.

"You will have to pass through a great many ordeals before this is done," observed Mr. Puffer. "You will have to give indubitable proof of your courage to convince the Brothers that you can be trusted. They will do all sorts of things to frighten you, to see whether or not you are afraid."

"I am not easily frightened," said Pancho. "I shall probably write that application to-night."

"For your own sake I hope that you will soon come to a favourable decision."

Mr. Puffer accompanied Pancho to the door, and as they were bidding each other good-bye, Pancho said:

"By the by, I almost forgot to ask you a question, which you may, perhaps, consider absurd. Do the Adepts believe in God?"

"In *our* Society," answered Mr. Puffer, "every man's belief is respected. If you choose to imagine that the moon is made of green cheese, there is no one to prevent you from believing it, any more than in God. No, they do not believe in such nonsense."

"I thought so," answered Pancho. "I merely asked the question to settle all doubts for once and for ever. Farewell!"

"*Au revoir!*" said Mr. Puffer.

When Pancho left Mr. Puffer, he was highly elated at the prospect of becoming a Chela, and being initiated into the mysteries of African Magic. He did not doubt for a moment that he had all the necessary qualifications, and by becoming a member of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom, he had already made the most important step, and attracted the attention of the Adepts. Henceforth he had to be very

careful in what he was doing, for there might be an Adept lurking in every corner to watch his actions. He knew that it was not an easy thing to become a Chela, and that it required a man of courage. Many had applied for Chelaship, but failed after they were tried. This was not to be feared in Pancho's case. He was a person of undoubted bravery, and not afraid even of the devil. When a small boy in school he could fight single-handed and lick the rest of the boys; and during his studies at Heidelberg he had fought many duels and come out triumphant in every instance. As to swimming and shooting, there were few who were his superiors, and if, as he had read, it was necessary for a Chela to pass through flame and fire, his chemical knowledge enabled him to make his clothes incombustible, so that he could jump through it without getting burnt.

"But why," he thought, "should he write a letter of application for Chelaship to the Adepts? If those Brothers were ubiquitous and all-knowing, they would know his wish, and if they wanted him, they would be able to let him know it without his formal application." But then Pancho was not sufficiently acquainted with the rules of occult etiquette to answer the question. Perhaps it was a formality which had to be observed, and perhaps, also, Puffer could give him only partial information.

There was only one thought to which he could not get reconciled, namely, that of leaving his wife. He had no cause to abandon her, and did not wish to do so. Conchita had always been faithful to him and she had just claims to his protection. But then, he argued with himself, that the greater the sacrifice, the greater was also his merit. He saw himself in the position of a player who puts his whole fortune upon one single card, either to burst the bank or to go to perdition. He ended by a compromise.

"What would Conchita say," he thought, "if I were to go to Africa to solve such a difficult problem? Surely she is a reasonable woman and will not object. Men leave their homes

and wives for the purpose of gaining money; they go on voyages of discovery to the regions of eternal snow, or to the tropical zones of Africa, remaining away for years. Why should I not act likewise, and go to Africa in search of that which is far more important? Is there anything more valuable than a knowledge of the astral world, with its innumerable inhabitants? Is such a discovery not as much interesting as that of a new continent? Can there be anything more important than scientific proof of the existence of a class of spiritual beings who guide the destinies of mankind? Surely Conchita is of far too noble a mind not to consent to a separation for such a glorious purpose."

"You ass!" said an interior voice, probably that of some vile Elemental. "These mysterious Brotherhoods have no other existence than in the brain of Mr. Puffer."

"Get thee behind me, Satan!" answered Pancho, speaking to himself. "How could it be possible that the representative of a Society which worships the truth should speak anything else but the truth? Moreover, men might lie about ordinary things, but surely only a villain of the deepest dye would descend to that lowest imaginable state of degradation, in which the most holy and sacred things are trifled with or made objects of financial speculation. What but child's play are murder and arson, and vice of every kind, in comparison with that dark villainy of those vampires who seek material profit by playing upon the spiritual aspirations of man? Who but an unconceivable monstrosity of concentrated devilry would dare to prostitute the highest and most exalted truths for the purpose of gratifying his greed for a few pennies, knowing how terrible would be the reaction?"

"Fool!" spoke the voice of the Elemental. "You need not go to Africa to find the Spirit of Truth."

"Avaunt!" answered Pancho. "What will the spirit of truth benefit me if it does not become manifest? If that spirit has descended upon the mysterious Brotherhood, and

if the inmates of Urur are in communication with it, what a glorious thing will it be to enlist in their army, and to become one of the pioneers to break down the wall of superstition and ignorance which encircles the world! To attain such an object, and to bring light to suffering humanity, is well worth the sacrifice, not only of my own life, but also of that of my wife."

Thus Pancho's mind was swayed by thoughts of an opposite kind and by a series of partly logical, partly illogical, arguments. He reasoned himself into a belief that it was not only his right but also his duty to leave his wife and to go to Africa, to learn wisdom by sitting at the feet of the Hierophant who would introduce him to the Mysterious Brotherhood. Men are always willing to believe in the possibility of that which they desire. By the time that he reached his home, he was fully resolved to write the letter to the Lunar Adepts, which was to be his application for Chelaship.

He arrived at his residence, and went to Conchita's room. There, upon a couch, was his beautiful wife peacefully sleeping. She had evidently waited for his return before retiring to bed. A happy smile rested upon her face, her hands were folded over her bosom which rose and sank in rhythmic proportions with her almost imperceptible breath. The rose-coloured shade of the lamp caused the light to produce a delicate roseate hue upon her graceful shoulders and arms, which would have otherwise seemed to be made of white Carrara marble; her long black hair having unfastened, now fell in dark heavy masses upon her bust. She looked like a being of supernatural beauty, and it now seemed to Pancho that there was no necessity to go any further to seek the truth; for that which is good and beautiful must also be true. He felt as if even the thought of deserting her was an unpardonable sin to atone for immediately; and carried away by his emotion, he kissed her soft cheek.

Conchita opened her eyes and looked surprised and pleased. Putting her arms around his neck, she pressed him to her heart, and said: "Dearest one! I had such a dream! I thought I was with you on the bank of a stream, and in the distance there was a beautiful island. It was full of flowers and the breeze wafted the odour of the blossoms to the place where we stood. There was a little boat, only big enough to hold one person. You went into the boat and said you would fetch me some of the flowers; but the current took you far out of my sight. I then became very sick. I cried and was wringing my hands in despair, when I discovered that I was myself on that island and you by my side. You then put your arms around me and kissed me and then I awoke."

"I too had a stupid dream," answered Pancho, "but it is over. Fear not, my beloved one, our two loves shall never be separated."

"I know it," answered Conchita; "but I want not only your love, I want yourself."

The letter which Pancho had intended to write to the Lunar Brotherhood remained unwritten that night.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OCCULT LETTER.

PANCHO dreamed that night. It seemed to him that he and Conchita were in a boat in mid-ocean. A storm arose and the waves grew higher and higher. At last they seemed like mountains of water, and one of them went over the boat, entirely submerging it. He was convinced that they were both lost. He threw his arms around her, but she was torn away from him by the force of the water. Then the wave receded and he found himself still in the boat, but Conchita was gone. She was nowhere to be seen, although the ocean as by some miracle had now become perfectly calm. He then looked upwards and saw her floating in the air, radiant and smiling. She had become a glorified being, and a bright star shone over her head. It was the influence of that star that had calmed the sea.

As long as he dreamed, he was happy; but when his external consciousness returned and the intellectual machinery of his brain again began to create for him once more illusions, his former doubts and hopes returned. The face of the Chelas at Urur, through whom the inaccessible, mysterious Adeptship might be reached, floated on his mental horizon, and the voice of the Talking Image sounded to him more alluring than the song of the Loreley: "Am I not worthy," it said, "that you should come across the sea to behold me? I, the Sphinx of

the nineteenth century, the corner stone of the world's future religion? Are there not hundreds lying prostrate at my feet, and thousands longing to worship at my shrine? Lo, the Mysterious Brotherhood requires a man to communicate their orders to the world; where will they find such a man? Are you so firmly tied to a woman by the chain of your affection that you cannot defend the truth?" Then the phantom face of Mr. Puffer, the Chela, opened its mouth and spoke. "Better write to the Lunar Adepts, and I will have it laid before the shrine of Urur. What harm can be done by merely writing a letter? Let us see what the result will be? Whatever answer you may receive, you will still be at liberty to do as you like! Write the letter!" When the voice ceased, it seemed as if a thousand echoes in Pancho's brain were repeating the sentence: "Write! Write! Write the letter! the letter! the let—ter!"

Pancho hastily arose and dressed himself; and then his reasoning powers returned. For a moment he thought he would confess to his wife that he had been thinking of going to Africa, but he abandoned this idea. Why should he do so now? He thought it would be time enough for that when he had arrived at a certain decision. He made up his mind to say nothing about it, and thus he established a barrier between him and his wife which prevented the full and harmonious flow of thought between the two, hence, a perfect understanding. Formerly they were one in their thoughts and feelings; now they were separated from each other by a secret, and thus the curse which accompanies the desire for gratification of curiosity had already begun to work.

Juana had now become a member of their little household, and she behaved herself much better than had been expected. She made herself useful in many ways, doing small work about the house and the kitchen. Since her arrival Pancho had not asked her for a continuation of psychic experiments; but now he desired to try again her powers. Juana obeyed

and, to his astonishment, she described to him a negro in the garb of an African chieftain, holding a sealed letter in his hand and upon the envelope was Pancho's name.

"This man," she said, "is a spirit ; but not of one who is dead, but of a man who is living. He is a great and powerful person, and he says : ' Write ! ' "

"Do you see anything more ?" asked Pancho.

"Yes," answered Juana. "He now shows me a very queer-looking place, something like a church, and in the midst of it is an altar upon which is a woman dressed in white."

After a pause she continued : "No ; it is not a woman ; it is much bigger than an ordinary woman, and it is made of stone. It is a statue, and nevertheless, it is alive and can talk as well as anybody. It is very queer !"

Pancho was delighted. There was, as he supposed, indubitable proof that the Adepts could communicate with him even through Juana. To hesitate any longer would surely displease them. Did not Mr. Puffer say that he must unhesitatingly obey all orders coming from that quarter, and should he commence his occult career by hesitating to do so ? He went to his room and without further delay wrote a letter to them, offering his services to the unknown Mysterious Brotherhood, and asking to be accepted as their disciple.

Such a precious document could not be safely entrusted to a servant, and so he determined to hand it personally to Mr. Puffer. Once more he wended his way to the Grand Hotel. Mr. Puffer was delighted.

"I have no doubt," he said, receiving the letter, "that you will be accepted on probation, and now, as you have entered upon the Path, I advise you to cease shaving or cutting your hair, because, in doing so, a great deal of magnetism is lost. Do not eat any meat. Eggs are permitted, but you must always first remove the dot from the yolk. The dot is the seat of life and must not be destroyed."

"But is not the dot destroyed by boiling ?" asked Pancho.

"This is none of our business," answered Mr. Puffer. "It will go to the *Karma* of the cook. It is enough if we do not destroy it ourselves. Furthermore you must never eat any beans. There is nothing more dangerous than beans. They have been expressly prohibited by Pythagoras."

"I am sorry," said Pancho ; "for I am very fond of baked beans."

"I do not care," replied Mr. Puffer. "You will have to choose between Wisdom and beans."

When Pancho returned to his house it seemed to him that he had made a step lower down in the scale of evolution and rendered himself extremely ridiculous by submitting his own reason to the will of an unknown superior ; but he attributed this feeling to the circumstance that it was probably his lower nature which rebelled against the unaccustomed restraint, and that it would be absolutely necessary to obey. He remembered having been once told by a clergyman that if our reason does not harmonize with the doctrines of the Church we must squelch it and believe in the doctrines. He made up his mind to make that attempt to see what would be the result. "I have gone so far," he said to himself. "Now I will see it through, let the result be what it may."

It required nearly three months to receive an answer from Africa. During that time Pancho grew more and more morose and melancholy. He did not dare to show any love to his wife, because he was afraid that the ubiquitous mysterious Brothers were watching him and then consider him unfit for Chelaship. He therefore only halfway suffered her caresses and rather submitted than responded to her marks of affection. In his outward bearing he was as polite towards her as before, but his manner had now something forced and unnatural, a circumstance which never escapes the observation of a sensitive woman. Conchita noticed the change in her husband and his growing coldness, which seemed rather assumed than natural, and with many words of endearment she tried to find out the

secret of his trouble. It was in vain that Pancho denied his being troubled about anything, and invented all sorts of excuses; her intuition told her plainly that the former harmony between their souls no longer existed. Many were the bitter tears which she shed when alone in her room, and many the prayers she offered to the unknown God; but when Pancho was present she appeared merry, for the purpose of cheering him up. Pancho, too, was aware that his wife was silently suffering, and he would have been most willing to give an explanation; but how could he tell her that her own existence was the cause of his grief, and that she had become an obstacle in his way?

Partly to while away the time, and partly with a view to obtain information about the doings of the Mysterious Brotherhood, Pancho held frequent séances with Juana, at which Conchita took part, for she felt instinctively that her husband's change of behaviour was somehow connected with spiritualistic matters, and hoped thus to find out its cause. Juana was evidently a strong medium. There were loud raps and the usual spiritualistic phenomena, and frequently the girl became entranced, speaking under the influence of different spirits.

One of the "spirits" appeared to be that of an African Adept, who extolled the wisdom of the East, and its superiority over that of the West.

"The East," he said, "is the land of wisdom, for it is the land where the sun rises. The East includes everything that is east of New York, especially Asia and Africa. All light comes from the East and goes to the West, and then it comes back again to the East. The three sages mentioned in the Bible came from the East. There are lots of Eastern sages, but who ever heard of a Western sage? All the Rosicrucians of the Middle Ages went to the East in search of wisdom, and the last of the Alchemists has emigrated to the East."

Communications of that kind only increased Pancho's wish to go to the land of Wisdom, and they forged still stronger the links with which his will was held captive by an inflamed desire.

Conchita, too, became caught with this strange infatuation. It seemed as if her own thoughts found expression through the mouth of the Indian girl; for a superior spirit, who said that its name was "Purity," spoke to her through the entranced Juana, and whenever this spirit took possession of the Indian girl, she became, so to say, transfigured, and her face assumed an angelic expression.

"Grieve not," said the spirit, "we are constantly around to guard you. We are the messengers sent by the Most High, and no evil can befall those that trust in our guidance. There are dark clouds gathering on the horizon whose exact nature we are not permitted to reveal; but if you have faith in the divine power that guides all things, all will be well. God sees everything, and not the least thing escapes His attention, for it is written that not even a sparrow falls from a tree without the will of God."

The influence passed away, and then the spirit of the African Adept returned and wrote upon a paper:

"The spirit that just spoke is a liar. If a sparrow does not exert its own will to remain upon the tree, there is no God that will keep him there."

That was exactly Pancho's idea, and he was glad to see it confirmed.

"How strange!" exclaimed Conchita. "I always imagined that a sparrow had no will of its own, and that its will was the will of God."

"Nonsense!" said Pancho. "There is no such thing as God. The African Adepts do not believe in a God and they know what they are talking about."

"They must be very unhappy!" replied Conchita.

Pancho gave no reply; he saw that his wife was too

ignorant to understand such philosophical questions, and he did not wish to enter into a discussion that might end in a dispute.

"What is the name of the African Adept who is communicating with us?" asked Pancho.

"Molobolo," was the written answer.

"I thought Molobolo was the African king with whom Mr. Puffer stayed," said Pancho, and the answer came:

"He was a king, and has now become an Adept."

Thus Pancho received communications from "Molobolo" and Conchita from "Purity," and as these communications often contradicted each other, while each of the two parties believed in the infallibility of his or her guide, they only served to separate our friends still more and to create an antagonism between them, which became stronger in proportion as it became repressed.

The subject of Spiritualism now formed almost exclusively the topic of their conversation. Pancho who had already had considerable experiences in such matters did not believe that these communications originated from spirits of the dead, nor from angels. He had read a great deal about *Shells* and *Elementaries* and said that he knew a thing or two and was not going to be humbugged. As to "Purity" being an angel, as Conchita supposed, he argued that if there were no God, there could be no angels; but he believed in the possibility of receiving communications from living Adepts, and therefore those of Molobolo were to him genuine and all the rest was a fraud.

Conchita had elicited from Pancho an account of his visit to Mr. Puffer, and she now attributed Molobolo's communications to an influence exercised over Pancho's mind by Mr. Puffer. She believed in "Purity" but not in Molobolo, who, she said, was an evil spirit brought by Mr. Puffer. Pancho defended Molobolo and denounced "Purity" as being a fraud. Their discussions became sometimes very animated and would have

often ended in a quarrel, if it had not been for Conchita's ability to turn things into a joke.

One day Pancho remarked :

"My dear, all that 'Purity' says is nothing else but the reflections of your own mind ; but as to King Molobolo, I know that he is a real and living person, residing at Kakodumbala in the Lybian desert ; there can be no doubt of his identity ; for Mr. Puffer himself has been living with him."

"But, my dear," said Conchita, "how do you know that the Molobolo that talks through Juana is not also a reflection of your own mind ?"

"Because," answered Pancho, "Adepts can do such things and spirits cannot. Moreover, my intuition tells me that it is Molobolo."

"My intuition tells me that Purity is just as good as Molobolo," replied Conchita. "They are either both true or both false."

"You are mistaken, my dear," said Pancho. "There must be a great difference between an Adept and a pretended spirit. I really shall have to go to Africa myself to settle the question."

"I wish you would go," said Conchita. "It would be better to settle it than to worry continually about it."

"I am seriously thinking of doing so," said Pancho.

A few days after this conversation took place, the postman brought a large package with a stamp of the post-office from the Cape of Good Hope. Pancho opened it, and found that it contained two letters. The first was a note from the Hierophant, saying that Pancho's application for Chelaship had been received and submitted to the Mysterious Brotherhood by means of the Shrine, and that the enclosed answer had been received. It also expressed the hope that Pancho would come to Urur to become a co-worker in the Cause of the truth for the benefit of humanity.

The second letter was inclosed in a curious envelope, on

which mystic characters in various colours were printed. Pancho's breath stood still as he opened it, for this was the letter from a real Adept, settling once and for ever the question of their existence. He opened it and found a note written in a strange handwriting. It read as follows:—

"FRIEND,—He who desires to devote his life to the service of Humanity must do so with his whole mind, his whole heart, implicitly and without any reserve. Tear out of your soul the root of evil, the love of pleasures which are not calculated for the fulfilment of the highest aspirations that man can have. Sacrifice your lower passions to your higher aspirations. Oh for a man who will work unselfishly for the benefit of humanity ! All our knowledge of the past, the present and the future would be too little to repay him. Work for the cause of the truth, and great will be your reward. The Cause needs capable assistants. Your qualifications are excellent. It rests with you to develop your powers."

The signature of this letter was illegible, but it was not Molobolo's name. The rest of the package contained a great many certificates, testifying to the good character and reputation of Captain Bumpkins, and praising his honesty and veracity. It also gave an account of the valuable services which he had rendered while in the employ of King Molobolo, all of which was to show that the Hierophant was a reliable person.

"This is plain enough," said Pancho to himself, after reading the letter. "I must go to Urur. I must make sacrifices to attain an exalted position."

"Yes, I shall go," he added, after a pause of reflection. "What is separation from a wife in comparison with the attainment of all the knowledge of the Adepts ? It will be very painful to her to see me go, but it will not kill her, and when I have learned the art of making the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life, I may come back to her."

He firmly resolved to go. He took courage and spoke to his wife about it, preparing beforehand all that he would say in answer to her objections. But Conchita did not object.

"Go, my beloved one," she said, "if it is your pleasure to do so. I know that you will not be satisfied until you have seen the Talking Image yourself."

"But what will you do while I am gone?" asked Pancho.

"Wait until you return," answered Conchita.

"But if I do not return?" said Pancho.

"I know that you will return," replied Conchita. "After you have seen the Elephant you will be satisfied and glad to return to your wife."

Pancho was somewhat stung by this remark, for he did not like to have such a sacred thing as the Talking Image compared with an elephant in a show; but he made no reply. He was satisfied with having so easily gained Conchita's consent. He said:

"I hope to have my clairvoyant powers in a short time sufficiently developed to enable me to see how you are doing."

"I have just been thinking of doing the same," she said. "Juana told me of a man who is giving instructions how to become clairvoyant."

"Oh, that will be nice, for I suppose that I will not have much time to write."

It was settled that Pancho should leave by the next steamer of the Pacific Mail Company.

Let not the reader suppose that Pancho was an extraordinary simpleton. There are thousands of persons living to-day, in high social positions, and being looked upon as wise, who are equally unreasonable. He was a person of more than average intelligence, but he was unconsciously selfish; he did not possess the knowledge of Self. His egoistic propensities caused him to see the truth in only a distorted aspect; his reason was made captive by it, enslaved by his desire.

In vain truth battled in him against error. During the

night preceding his departure for Africa it made one more herculean effort to obtain mastery over him. He was in bed, but he could not sleep. It was as if a heavy load was resting upon his soul; he felt as if he were about to commit a great crime. An invisible vampire, ponderous as lead, seemed to be squatting upon his heart and sucking out his strength. His immortal spirit seemed to have departed, leaving behind only a gross material shell whose weight was dragging it down into the depths of the earth. He was conscious of being alive, but his life-blood seemed to be swarming with worms and reptiles, battling with each other, the symbols of his conflicting desires. To lie quiet under such circumstances was an impossibility; corporeal rest became intolerable. He rose, and dressing himself, attempted to go out, but the night was dark, and the rain coming down in torrents drove him back into the house. He groped his way back to the sleeping-room, and as he approached the bed it seemed to him that in the place of Conchita there was an ugly serpent with the face of Juana grinning at him. He turned away in disgust. Rather than remain at home he would be drowned in the rain. As he stepped out into the street there was a great shock of earthquake. It was the night in which a part of the Island of Java was destroyed and sank into the sea.

What was the cause of Pancho's emotions? Was it that he felt the coming earthquake? Was it the higher consciousness battling against the decisions of the animal mind and trying to prevent him from committing a bad action? or was it a foreboding of the evil results that would follow his departure? Who can tell? It is said that earthquakes are due to a disturbance of emotions in the soul of the earth. The elements in Pancho's soul were likewise in a state of terrible conflict. It was as if his individuality had become divided into two separate entities, both existing in the same personality. One of these urged him to go, the other one bade him to stay, and Pancho did not know which one was right, or which wrong.

We will not enter into the details of what took place before his departure. It will be sufficient to say that Conchita showed a remarkable amount of self-control. She spoke of the joy that awaited her when she would see him return, and thought of how happy they would be together when the cobwebs in Pancho's brain would have been removed by the African sun. She attempted to appear gay, and proposed to accompany her husband on board of the steamer; but when the fatal hour arrived, and she had dressed herself to go with him to the wharf, her courage gave way. Sobbing bitterly, she threw herself upon a lounge, and when Pancho entreated her to speak, he merely heard her whisper the words, "Father! Not my will, but Thine shall be done!"

Pancho hurried away.

CHAPTER V.

COLLEAGUES.

THE steamer on which Pancho took passage was a most beautiful ship of enormous dimensions. She had good accommodation, not only for numerous cabin passengers, but also for a great many Chinamen, who were about to return to their homes in the land of the Celestials, to celebrate the New Year ; for on this important day it is customary in China to square up all accounts, and he who cannot settle his bills then and there loses his reputation and credit. There were over a thousand Chinese on board, occupying the lower deck, while in the state-rooms were lodged ladies and gentlemen of position, English lords travelling for pleasure, foreign consuls returning to their posts, grave-looking professors of science bent upon the discovery of some new insect or plant, and last, but not least, a number of young and gay missionaries with their newly-married wives, anxious to convert the heathen, and hoping to find a comfortable parsonage, with very little martyrdom connected with it.

There was a great bustle and noise as the preparations for leaving the harbour were progressing, and soon Pancho wished himself back to his quiet home. More than once he instinctively started to return ; but while he hesitated the bell rang the last signal, the whistle sounded, the ropes that held the

steamer to the wharf were drawn in, and all this seemed to him like the reading of his death warrant and preparations for the execution. Then the bridge was taken away, the ponderous engines began to puff and to roar, and the musicians played a valse. The command was given, the steamer began to move, and a watery grave opened its jaws between him and his beloved Conchita. For one moment he was ready to leap over the railing and jump back upon the wharf; but he hesitated, and in a moment it was too late. Then, for the first time, he fully realized that he was now separated from his wife, and it took all the strength of his will to keep himself from giving way to despair. He wanted to throw himself upon the ground, like Romeo in the play. He too was now banished from his beloved country and from the world in which his Juliet lived. Banished, not by a tyrant in mortal form, but by the demon of curiosity, the king of all evils.

Hurrahs arose from the crowd on the shore and from the sailors on board; they sounded to him like the howling of devils rejoicing over his torture; but in his soul there arose a cry of despair far louder than all that music and hurraing, a cry which must certainly have reached beyond the noisy wharf and beyond the house-tops and spires of the City of a Thousand Hills, and reached a little cottage where a beautiful woman was lying in a death-like swoon upon the floor.

There was one more chance for escape, for when the ship left the "Golden Gate," entering upon the open sea, the pilot left the ship, and a number of people who had accompanied their friends returned with him; but now Pancho had sufficiently recovered his will-power to resist the temptation. He watched the pilot-boat as it receded from the steamer, and the people in it waving their handkerchiefs to their friends, and as he watched, he thought he saw a female figure, dressed in white, with long, black hair falling over her shoulders, standing on the forecastle, wringing her hands, and a cry like that

of one dying in agony covered the roar of the waves, calling :
"O, Pancho! My Pancho, return!"

Too late! A breeze began to blow and the waves grew higher, showing their foam-covered crests. Occasionally a wave higher than the others dashed against the side of the steamer, throwing a spray of salt water upon the lower deck and causing consternation among the Chinamen, while the passengers on the upper deck enjoyed the fun. But soon the latter ceased in their turn to laugh, and the faces of many assumed a serious aspect. The first effects of sea-sickness were manifested in the high and the low, and even the missionaries turned pale and lost their hilarity.

It is doubtful whether there is any condition during which man feels more miserable than when his brain loses its point of balance on account of sea-sickness. The desire to die became so strong in Pancho's mind that it excluded every other thought. But even the greatest evils will have an end, no grief is lasting for ever, and after a few days other curious events attracted his attention.

Among the passengers there was one especially grave and solemn-looking young man with long dark-brown hair, looking like an itinerant clergyman of the Baptist persuasion. This young man was accompanied by an extraordinary tall and lean female of past middle age, with sharp features and a short aquiline nose. Her artificial hair was of a different colour from that which had still been spared on her head by the cruel, destroying hand of Time. She was dressed in the height of fashion, with a profusion of sham jewellery, and her eyes wandered restlessly all over the ship, scrutinizing everybody, especially the rest of the ladies on board.

For several days the dignified-looking young man, either on account of his natural modesty, or on that of etiquette, was not seen to speak with anyone except the old lady, but as he occupied a place at the dinner-table next to Pancho, the usual civilities habitually indulged in on such occasions led to a con-

versation, in the course of which the stranger handed his card to Pancho. It was as follows :

A. B. C. GREEN, T.Ch.M.B.,
M. S. D. W., G. S. L. E.,
L. C. B. W. T., V. A., S. S. S., C. B.,
etc., etc., etc.

It appeared afterwards that these mysterious letters were to be interpreted as follows:—Anthony Balthazar Charles Green, Titulary Chela of the Mysterious Brotherhood, Member of the Society for Distribution of Wisdom, Graduate of the School of Law at Edwardsville, Late Correspondent of the *Bullington Weekly Times*, Visitor of America, Student of the Secret Sciences, Collector of Books, etc., etc., etc.

This introduction was followed by that of the old lady, whose name was Amelia Celestina Gloriosa Honeycomb.

Mr. Green continued to look very solemn and had little to say, but Mrs. Honeycomb at once opened her heart. She expressed herself delighted in making Pancho's acquaintance.

"In one of my former incarnations," she said, "I knew a person to whom you have a striking resemblance. He was a very dear friend of mine, and many a star-lit night have I wandered with him along the flowery banks of the Nile, inhaling the odours of the acacias, and listening to the song of the nightingales, or we would be gliding along the current of the river in a mahogany boat, covered with roses and orange blossoms, while the chaste moon overhead threw her silvery rays upon the water, and our Nubian slave, sitting at the rudder and guiding the boat, would sing to us one of his weird native songs, accompanying it with his harp."

"So you are a believer in reincarnation?" asked Pancho.

"Oh, yes!" sighed Mrs. Honeycomb. "I remember ten of

my incarnations. In my last one I was a Greek slave ; but I was treated so badly by my cruel master that I hate to think of it. I only know that I was very, very beautiful, and that my beauty caused me a great deal of trouble."

"Dear me, how much she has changed!" thought Pancho. However, he did not express his thought, but asked Mr. Green whether he also remembered his past incarnations.

"I have been told that I was Socrates," replied Mr. Green very gravely, "but I do not remember it. However, I expect to find out all these things when we arrive at Urur."

"Are you going to Urur?" asked Pancho, surprised.

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Green. "I have been accepted as a probationary Chela by the Mysterious Brotherhood."

"Let me congratulate you," said Pancho. "Do you already know who your Master is?"

"I am not personally acquainted with him, but his name is Rataraborumatchi."

"And from whom do you get your orders?"

"I get them through Mrs. Honeycomb," replied Mr. Green. "She is very much advanced in Chelaship, as you may see by the fact that she remembers her ten incarnations ; but this is due to the fact that she was an Egyptian priestess, a thousand years ago."

Mrs. Honeycomb seemed to be well pleased with Mr. Green's explanation. "If anyone fails to see," she exclaimed, "that Mr. Green was Socrates, I shall have my own opinion about such a person's clairvoyance. I tell you Socrates is in him, and will out occasionally. When we were at Saratoga at dinner with my friend, the Countess Carnivalli, she said Mr. Green reminded her so much of Socrates. 'My dear friend Mrs. Honeycomb,' said the Countess, 'there cannot be the slightest mistake about his having been Socrates.'"

Mr. Green looked still more solemn and dignified, if possible. Suddenly he said : "Gnothi seauton."

"There ; you have it!" exclaimed Mrs. Honeycomb. "It

means, '*know thyself*.' Mr. Green always says that when Socrates speaks in him."

"It is a very wise saying," remarked Pancho.

"Indeed it is!" said Mrs. Honeycomb. "It is an excellent saying. There is nothing so useful as when one knows himself. Nowadays it is an easy thing to know oneself, but in Socrates's time it was difficult, because people did not have such good looking-glasses then as now; we had only those miserable metal mirrors, and it took a lot of scrubbing to keep them polished."

"Tell us something of your experience when you were the Greek slave," begged Pancho.

"Don't mention it," sighed Mrs. Honeycomb. "It makes me feel dreadful to think of it! I was fastened to a chain, and there was a man who used to trifle with my affections. I remember him well. If I ever catch him in this present incarnation, I will make it hot for him," she suddenly fired up.

"Peace, Mrs. Honeycomb!" said, very severely, Mr. Green. "Do not give way to feelings which are entirely below the dignity of a Chela. The man may have repented and suffered for his wickedness in *Avitchi*, or he may be still in *Kama loca*, and your revengeful feeling will keep him there."

"I have looked all over *Kama loca*, but I could not find the villain," replied Mrs. Honeycomb. "Of course, I did not go to *Avitchi*. I do not like to go to such a disreputable place."

"So you are clairvoyant?" asked Pancho.

"I occasionally go out in my astral body," answered Mrs. Honeycomb, evasively.

"I wish I could do the same thing," he said.

"It is a dangerous thing to do," replied Mrs. Honeycomb. "You must be well trained, especially if you attempt it without a guide. Before Captain Bumpkin, the Hierophant, was well trained, he once tried to get out in his astral body. He staggered around the room like a blind man, and struck his astral

head against the too material bed-post. When he awoke he had a great big bump on his physical eye."

"How does it feel, when one gets out in his astral body?" asked Pancho.

"Oh, so nice," said Mrs. Honeycomb. "Everything looks just as natural as when you are in your physical body, but then you see only the astral counterpart of things. My friend, the Countess Carnivalli, went out once in her astral body, and was nearly frightened to death by an astral cow. It was all she could do to get back into her physical sheath before the cow knocked her down. It was in the country, and when the Countess Carnivalli opened her eyes there was actually a physical cow rushing at her, and she had to climb with her physical body over a physical fence."

"And then those horrid Elementals and Elementaries!" added Mr. Green. "I have been told that the very sight of them is enough to make one sick at the stomach."

"Oh, Mr. Green!" exclaimed Mrs. Honeycomb. "Will you do me the favour never to use such a vulgar expression in my presence again. Say 'digestive organs,' if you have to say anything in regard to such physiological apparatus."

"Well," said Mr. Green, "it makes one sick at one's digestive organs."

"You have quite shocked my nerves," said Mrs. Honeycomb. "Go to my cabin and fetch me my bottle with smelling-salts."

"A nice young man!" remarked Pancho, while Mr. Green was hurrying away.

"Very nice indeed!" said Mrs. Honeycomb. "Only he uses such vulgar expressions and does such boorish things. Would you believe it? When we were invited to dinner, at the house of my friend, the Countess Carnivalli, he actually cut his fish with a knife. I thought I should die. Of course my friend, the Countess Carnivalli, fainted right away."

"He seems to have excellent qualifications for Chelaship," said Pancho.

"Oh, yes!" answered Mrs. Honeycomb. "He is ready to believe anything, especially if it comes in a letter that is dropped on his head."

Mr. Green returned with the smelling-salts.

"Thanks," said Mrs. Honeycomb, receiving the bottle. "The Master says you may now go and meditate for an hour."

"All right!" said Mr. Green, going away. But Mrs. Honeycomb called him back.

"Mr. Green," she said, "Master says you must not let any idea come into your head."

"Never!" solemnly acquiesced Mr. Green.

"Now go!" She ordered him off, and Mr. Green disappeared down stairs.

"What is he going to do?" inquired Pancho.

"We always make him sit every day for an hour or two and look at any fly speck on the wall," replied Mrs. Honeycomb, "so that the Master can work his brain and get it into good shape to make it receptive. The poor fellow is very anxious to become clairvoyant."

"He seems to be very obedient."

"Oh, yes! He is easily managed. If we would tell him to jump overboard, he would do so unhesitatingly. He is used to obedience. He was educated by a Christian clergyman, who made him do lots of nonsensical things to train him to obey. For two years Mr. Green had every day, carefully to water a walking cane stuck into a flower-pot although he knew well enough that it would never grow. It was merely done to get him into the habit of not using his reason."

"But why did you tell him not to let any idea get into his head?"

"Because," was the answer, "there is nothing more dangerous for a Chela than if he does his own thinking. He should never think, but always believe what we tell him."

"What do you mean by *we*?" asked Pancho. "Has Mr. Green any other teacher besides yourself?"

"At present I am his only guide," she answered. "He has full faith in me; but I always take care not to tell him anything very unreasonable; for he cannot be trusted. He used to believe everything that the clergyman told him from the First Book of Genesis down to the last chapter of St. John's Revelation, but one day that clergyman told him that they were going to have apple pie for dinner and instead of that it was squash. From that hour, Mr. Green then lost his faith in his clergyman, and called him a liar. Ever since then, moreover, he swears that the whole Bible is a tissue of lies."

"But what has the Bible to do with the apple-pie?" asked Pancho.

"Mr. Green has studied logic," she replied. "He says that anything which a man who once lied tells us must not be believed. It was the clergyman who told him that the Bible was true, and, as the clergyman lied about the pie, this proved the Bible false."

"Very logical," thought Pancho. "These Chelas are very queer people."

During the subsequent days he became more intimately acquainted with Mr. Green. He found him to be a man of tolerably good education, but who, in spite of his having been Socrates, had not the faintest idea of the meaning of the term "self-knowledge." He had read a great many books and believed that nobody could possibly know anything unless he had read it in a respectable book, or had been told of it by a respectable person. All his knowledge consisted in a belief in what he had been taught, and this belief was based upon nothing else but a belief in the respectability and veracity of his teacher. If the teacher happened to lose his respectability in the eyes of Mr. Green, then necessarily all the beliefs of the latter, and consequently all his knowledge, went for nothing and were lost.

"I do not believe in the truth of the doctrines of a Church which employs untruthful and disreputable persons to teach them," said Mr. Green, once; "for how could anything else than lies come out of the mouth of a liar? In my country nobody believes the statements contained in any book unless its author is well known for his veracity."

"I prefer to use my own judgment rather than to rely on anybody's veracity," said Pancho.

"So do I," said Mr. Green. "I am not of a credulous, but of a very sceptical turn of mind. I never accept any statement from anybody unless I have sufficient proof of his respectability. I would not even have believed in Mrs. Honeycomb's statements, if she had not given me sufficient proof of her veracity. I am not a man who is easily imposed on. I had once such an experience, and since then I am more careful."

"How do you know that what Mrs. Honeycomb tells you is the truth?" asked Pancho.

"How could it be otherwise? Is not all that she says inspired by the Mysterious Brotherhood? Has she not given sufficient proof that she is in communication with Adepts? Does she not remember her past ten incarnations? Can she not go out in her astral body?"

"I don't know," our hero answered.

"That is because you are not a Chela," answered Mr. Green. "We Chelas are not permitted to doubt."

Such and similar conversations with Mr. Green made Pancho very sad and almost wish that he had stayed at home, for he recognized in him an overdrawn picture of his own self. All Mr. Green's hopes and inspirations were based upon a belief in Mrs. Honeycomb's veracity. All that had induced Pancho to go in search of the Mysterious Brotherhood was his belief in the truth of the statements made to him by Mr. Puffer.

"Is it then really true," he asked himself, "that nobody can be found who actually knows anything, and that all our

supposed knowledge is merely belief in statements made by others? Who is there who knows anything except what he is told by somebody else, and that somebody else what has been told in his turn to him? Can any truth be found except in mathematics and logic, and are we perfectly sure that even the basis upon which we base our calculation and logic is the correct one? Is not the truth of that basis likewise a mere assumption, if it cannot be logically proved; and if its truth can be known without any logical reasoning, why then should not all things be known without such artificial help? If I believe that 2×2 is four, because $1 + 1$ is two, my belief is based upon the assumption that twice one is two, and this again is incomprehensible unless I take it for granted that 1 is unchangeable and does not turn into another number. But what if we could not depend on the one? What if it were suddenly to change into two or into some other number; then $1 + 1$ instead of being 2 would perhaps be 3 or 4. But how do we know that 1 is 1 and unchangeable? As authority for it we have neither the statement of Mr. Puffer, nor that of Mrs. Honeycomb, nor even the declaration of an Adept. Nevertheless we know it, or imagine we know it, and if we can absolutely know one thing by our own intuition and without having been informed of it by another, why should we not be able to know all things in the same manner and without the necessity of logical proof? Surely there must be a mystery about these things, which I hope to have explained to me at Urur."

Among the passengers there were two German professors, of great scientific reputation. They were called by some the "inseparables," as they were always seen together. They were like "two hearts that beat as one," but as neither of them seemed to be in possession of that kind of knowledge which Pancho imagined to be possible to attain, they sometimes became divided in their opinions, and then they quarrelled with each other in a most objectionable manner.

They were both engaged in making a scientific voyage around the world, and had already discovered many wonderful things. Thus while stopping at a Mexican port they had seen a cat without a tail. They photographed that cat and were now engaged in writing a book, in which they proved that the cats in Mexico were without tails.

It was a fine evening. The sun shone in tranquil glory in the sky, as if he did not care a straw about the opinions of all the astronomers in the world, and the planet Earth revolved with the usual velocity around its axis, regardless of any scientist on board of the steamer, now aware of no other movement than that of the ship. The two professors were discussing some theories with regard to the interior of the earth; and while one insisted that the globe was a solid mass in a state of terrible heat, the other maintained that it was a hollow, egg-shaped body, containing no solid matter, but an atmosphere like our own. They had already waxed warm in defending their respective arguments, and their dispute began to attract the attention of the passengers on deck.

"Your theory," cried Professor Hopfer, "is absurd. As a man of science, you ought to know that if one digs down into the earth, he finds the temperature rising at the rate of about 2° R. for every hundred feet, which gives a heat of some 2,000 degrees at a depth of 100,000 feet below the surface. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*"

"This antiquated theory of yours, which is at present held only by those who are entirely ignorant of scientific principles," answered Professor Schlei, "has long ago been discarded by those who are better informed. It seems that you are not aware of the fact that at the boring of the artesian well at the insane asylum of St. Louis, the temperature increased in the manner described by you only until a depth of 3,209 feet had been reached, where it became 106 degrees, after which it began to sink, and at a depth of 3,817 feet the thermometer stood at 105; at ten feet farther down at 104, showing a

decrease of 1° R. for every ten feet, which at 10,000 feet would give a cold of 900 degrees, showing that the inner strata of the earth's crust are in a frozen state. *Verb. sap. sat.*"

"It seems more probable," remarked the other, "that the observations at the digging of that well were taken by the inmates of the asylum. A schoolboy would laugh at your theory, if he ever heard of volcanoes, the safety valves of the earth."

"Because," replied his opponent, "the schoolboy would be asinine enough to imagine that the fire of the volcanoes came from the centre of the earth, while those who have studied the matter know that it comes from chemical decompositions taking place within the crust of the earth. Do you want to make people believe that they are standing upon the top of a fiery mass of thousands of miles in diameter, with only an egg shell between them and a glowing hell below, which at any time might burst and send them to perdition?"

"I had some suspicion," he was promptly answered, "that you are in your dotage. Now I am certain of it, and arguments would be wasted upon you. If you were capable of reasoning, you would comprehend that we are not living on the periphery of a soap-bubble, which is at any moment ready to explode. You do not seem to know that Descartes had a similar theory and was forced to give it up, and that, according to the newest discoveries, our planet is a seven axial rotating ellipsoid. You seem to be ignorant of the fact that Gylden of Stockholm has solved the mathematical problem of the three bodies, by introducing the transcendental periodical functions discovered by Jacobi, and that he estimated the medium density of the earth as being 5.7."

This was a stunner for Mr. Schlei, but he quickly recovered.

"I hope," he exclaimed, "to live long enough to demolish you and your doctrines. I shall certainly write a book exposing your ignorance. I shall go to the North Pole and

enter through Symes' hole into the interior of the earth, to enjoy a good laugh at your stupidity."

"And have you forgotten, then," said Hopfer, "that I am on my way to Naples, where I will dig a tunnel connecting the crater of Vesuvius with the Mediterranean? I will put out the fires of the volcano, and of the whole of the interior of our globe. I shall explode your vile theory, and this if I have to blow up the whole earth to do so."

The quarrel was becoming serious, and it was with great difficulty that they were pacified by the bystanders. These were likewise divided in their opinions as to which one of the professors was in the right. Mr. Green proposed that it should be submitted to the decision of the Mysterious Brotherhood, but one of the missionaries said that it had already been decided in the Bible. Was it not written that in the beginning the earth was *void*, and there was *darkness* upon the face of the deep? If the earth were full of molten minerals, it could not have been void, and if there were a fire in it, it could not be dark; but this darkness also disposed of the theory about the holes at the poles.

It has not been stated whether or not everybody was satisfied with that explanation; but we know that Pancho was not. "What kind of a science is this," he said to himself, "if men of science know nothing, and only imagine certain things to be true by drawing deductions from external appearances or phenomena, which may go to support two opposite theories, and whose causes may be entirely different from what they imagine them to be? What kind of a being is man if he does not even know the nature of the planet upon which he lives, and how can he dare to decide on that which is beyond the stars?"

It was growing late. The passengers, one after another, retired to their cabins: but Pancho had no inclination to sleep. He stood at the railing and looked at the porpoises that were playing around the steamer, and at the streaks of

liquid gold which the ship left in her track as she ploughed her way through the phosphorescent waves. The moon was not visible, but the stars were shining brightly. Their light was reflected in the foaming waters which were thrown into confusion by the unceasing motion of the screw. The air was pure and calm, and fit for meditation, and the stars taught Pancho a lesson. For, while their reflections in the water were distorted by the motion of the waves, they themselves were not a bit affected by it, but shone and twinkled in the sky. "Thus," he said to himself, "it may be with Truth. It remains for ever the same, but its rays are broken and often distorted in the minds of men. Those who can see only the distorted image but mistake it for truth itself, live in illusion; those who can see Truth itself, see the Reality, and are in possession of knowledge."

Pancho wondered from whence he got this idea. It had never been told to him by any one, neither by Mr. Puffer nor Mrs. Honeycomb, and he believed in it, although its correctness had not been warranted to him by any respectable authority that he knew. But where could he find real truth?

As if in answer to his thought, a red glow appeared upon the eastern sky. Gradually the moon arose, throwing a silver stream upon the waters, causing the masts and the smoke-stacks to cast phantastic shadows upon the sea. A broad path of light seemed to extend from the horizon towards the ship, showing plainly the form of each wavelet within the glittering path; but it did not penetrate the watery depths below, where the corals and pearls, the sharks and the mermaids, were hidden far away from human sight.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VOYAGE CONTINUED.

THEY were now approaching the coast of Japan, and one morning when Pancho stepped upon the deck a wonderful sight met his eyes. Before him, and resting high in the air, was a new planet, a bright, glittering world, illuminated by the rays of the terrestrial sun, although the latter had not yet risen above the horizon. It was the snow-covered top of the volcano Fuji-yama, radiating with light, but whose foot was in darkness, for it was still dark in the valley, and a mass of mist and vapours played round the base of the mountain, making it appear as if the latter was not a thing belonging to this Earth, but a satellite created during the night.

After a short stop at Yokohama the steamer proceeded on her way. Gracefully she ploughed her way through the waters along the beautiful coast of Japan, and in sight of its bluff-lined shore. There were many lovely islands, and here and there, from behind the bushes, surrounded by a luxurious vegetation, and half hidden behind camphor and persimmon trees, peeped the roofs of the houses of the natives; neat cottages in idyllic places, such as Pancho had often dreamed about, and where he would have wished to spend the rest of his days with Conchita. Soon, however, the trees disappeared, and in the distance arose the volcano Oyama, grim and forbidding-looking, enveloped in smoke, sending dark masses of vapour up into the blue ether, and the edges of the clouds

were reddened by the lurid fires coming from the mysterious crater below.

Among those who enjoyed the novel sight was Mrs. Honeycomb, and, being gifted with the power of clairvoyance, she described the elementals of fire as they arose from the crater and delved again into its depths.

"How quickly these fiery elementals bob up and down!" she exclaimed. "Now, do you see that big one with his black, curly locks and the pitchfork in his hand? How they frolic and jump."

"Do you see anything?" asked Mr. Green.

"Of course I do," answered Mrs. Honeycomb. "If you do not see them you must be as blind as a bat. The crater is full of them, and they wriggle and squirm like bees in a hive. There are big ones and little ones. They elongate their bodies and contract them again."

"Are there any female elementals among them?" asked Mr. Green.

"Mr. Green!" said Mrs. Honeycomb. "I have already told you repeatedly not to think about females. It seems that you still have women on the brain. Were you not told that you could not become a genuine Chela as long as you are thinking of women? If you do that again you will draw upon you a severe reprimand from Rataraboru——"

"Hush!" interrupted Mr. Green. "There are people listening. Do not pronounce that holy name so publicly."

"——matchi," added Mrs. Honeycomb to her former sentence. "If I start to say something, it must out. I do not want to choke over it."

"I wish I could get an occult letter!" said Mr. Green. "It would do me much good, and then it would be such a good test for my friends, if I were to get one here on board where nobody can be suspected of cheating."

"You do not deserve any as long as you are such a doubter," said Mrs. Honeycomb.

"I am doing the best I can," replied Mr. Green.

It seems that then and there an invisible "Adept" was present and heard Mr. Green's request; for, incredible as it may appear, on the very night that followed this conversation, Mr. Green, being alone in his room, found an occult letter under his pillow, which was as follows:

"To Mr. Green, Prob. Chel. M.B.—Fortunate are those who can see without seeing, and hear without hearing, and know without knowing. Have faith in Mrs. Honeycomb. I will communicate my orders through her.—Rataraborumatchi."

Little sleep came upon the eyes of Mr. Green that night. He wept for joy, and more than once he started to knock for admittance at Mrs. Honeycomb's door, to tell her of his good fortune. He was only restrained from doing so by fear of creating a scandal which might have injured Mrs. Honeycomb's reputation. He therefore concluded to say nothing about it and to see whether Mrs. Honeycomb would discover it by her clairvoyant power; nor was he deceived in his intuition; for when he met her at the breakfast-table next morning, she asked him whether he had received a message from the Mysterious Brotherhood. This test fully convinced Mr. Green of Mrs. Honeycomb's occult powers, and he saw all his doubts vanish before the sunlight of truth.

Mr. Green was delighted. From a mere titular aspirant for Chelaship, he had now become a probationary Chela, as was proved beyond the possibility of a doubt by the wording of the letter. His bearing became still more solemn. He never permitted himself to indulge in a joke, and looked displeased when others showed signs of hilarity. He felt too much the importance and dignity of his position not to be overcome with awe, and he wondered at his own hidden greatness, which had entitled him to such honours.

"With the receipt of that letter," he said to Pancho, "a

new chapter has begun for me in my book of life. To become an accepted probationary Chela is one of the most respectable positions that can be obtained ; but it is also one of the most important ones, and not without danger, for I have been told that as soon as such an honour has been conferred upon one, it brings out all of his latent propensities for evil. If one has an inherited inclination to lie or to steal, as soon as he becomes a probationary Chela, he becomes a liar or thief. I tell you this as a matter of precaution in your intercourse with me. I am not fully aware of all my inherited propensities, and if you should some day miss your watch or something, you will have to attribute it to my development. As far as lying is concerned, I do not believe that there is any danger. I do not feel any inclination to lie."

Heretofore the subject of Occultism had been discussed only amongst our friends, but now Mr. Green, feeling, as he said, the influence of Rataraborumatchi upon him, considered it his duty to make propaganda among the passengers for a belief in Adepts, and the possibility of their existence soon became the general topic of conversation on board of the steamer. Mrs. Honeycomb received numerous applications from people who wanted to obtain occult letters and tests. One lady, who had been reading "Count de Gabalis," requested Mr. Green to get her an attendant spirit to do her work ; because she said that she always had so much trouble with her chambermaids, and would prefer a Sylphide that would not talk about her affairs with the neighbours. A young fellow wanted an Undine, and promised, if his request was granted, to provide her with all the water she could reasonably desire. Some wanted to be taught the art of making gold, and love powders, and a rich old invalid confidentially offered to Mr. Green a thousand dollars for a bottle of the Elixir of Life.

Mr. Green expressed his regret at his present inability to grant these requests, but promised to lay them before his "Master" on his arrival at Urur. He moreover stated that

if he should ever return to England, he proposed to establish there a College of Occultism, in which he would himself be professor.

Among the new passengers who had come on board in Japan, there was a

MR. A. BOTTLE, M.S.R.P.S., & S.S.D.U.S.

Professor of Magic.

As may be seen by the above card, Mr. Bottle was a member of a Society formed for the purpose of making Researches in Psychology, and also of Several other Societies for the Discovery of Unknown Sciences. He was himself a Professor of Magic, and had gained considerable reputation by testifying before the Seybert Commission in Philadelphia that he had never seen any spiritual phenomena, and that they were, therefore, all performed by tricks. He was an expert in classifying everything, and prided himself that he could explode anything which would not submit to his classification, as a humbug. Nevertheless, he was not a sceptic, or an infidel, but rather of a religious turn of mind. It was especially due to his efforts that a Society had been formed to explore the bottom of the Red Sea, to rake up the golden chariot-wheels which had been lost by the Egyptians drowned in their pursuit of the children of Israel. Mr. Bottle, in a scientific dissertation laid before the "Society for the Discovery of Unknown Sciences," had clearly given his reasons for his belief that these chariot-wheels, as well as many other articles of value, had resisted the influence of salt water, and could be recovered. He, moreover, had made himself famous by writing a book showing that the unicorn was not an extinct animal, and that some specimens of it still existed on the Island of Madagascar. He was now

on his way to it to secure the beast, and to sell it to Barnum's Museum.

Strange to say, while Mr. Bottler firmly believed in the occurrence of all the miracles described in the Bible, the accounts of which he took in their literal sense, he was a man of too scientific an education to believe in the existence of "Soul." He had himself been a professor of Psychology at a college in England, and knew that there was no such thing as that. Every fact which went to show that man could exercise powers other than those which were produced by the physiological action of his physical body was peremptorily denied by Mr. Bottler, and there was nothing too evident for him to deny. When he heard of the existence of a Mysterious Brotherhood possessing occult powers, he became much excited.

"Let these Mysterious Brothers come out of their dens," he said. "Let them show their certificates and qualifications! Let us see whether they can stand the test of science, before they come to ask us to believe in what they teach. Let them come out, I say! Who cares for sages whom nobody knows? Let them appear and perform their miracles before a committee of the S.R.P.S., and if they can stand the test we will take them under our protection. An Adept with a certificate from our association would command belief wherever he goes; but if he has no standing in our profession, he is only a quack."

Such disrespectful language in regard to the Mysterious Brotherhood could not be tolerated by Mr. Green, who, in his capacity as a Chela, felt it to be his duty to defend them.

"These Brothers," he said, "care nothing for your S.R.P.S., nor for your S.D.U.S. Their reputation is already too well established to need any certificates from *your* Society, but if you will come to Urur, I promise you in the name of the great Rataraborumatchi, whose influence I feel, that you will get satisfactory proof that such adepts do exist."

"Who is that Rataraborumatchi?" asked Mr. Bottler.

"He is a man whose name ought to be pronounced only with

the greatest reverence," said Mr. Green. "He is over a thousand years old, and still he looks as if he were thirty-five, because whenever he feels himself getting old, he takes a dram of the Elixir of Life and makes himself young again. He and the other Adepts are persons who know everything ; because the greatest ancient mysteries have been handed down to them from the remotest antiquity, either orally or by tradition. What they say is true and cannot be denied. All the religious systems in the world have been instituted by persons who are now dead, and of whom we, therefore, do not know whether or not they were sufficiently respectable to be believed by our present and more enlightened generation. But the members of the Mysterious Brotherhood are living persons whose respectability has been vouched for by many respectable persons. Moreover, they have given sufficient proof of their occult powers, and what they teach must be true."

"What kind of occult powers are they supposed to have?" asked Mr. Bottler.

"Come to Urur, and you will see it. In the meantime you had better be more guarded in your expressions in regard to them." So saying, Mr. Green walked away.

Mr. Bottler doubted very much the sanity of the Chela's mental condition. Nevertheless, his curiosity was now excited, and he desired to obtain more information in regard to Urur.

"What," he thought, "if the existence of the Adepts were a truth after all? If I could learn from them the art of making gold by artificial means, or to hypnotize the people in England and make them elect me a Member of Parliament. How astonished would be the members of the S.R.P.S., if I could bring them not only a Unicorn, but a living Adept!"

Mr. Bottler made up his mind to consult Mrs. Honeycomb.

Mrs. Honeycomb, in spite of her advanced years, was a remarkable woman. Her marriages with her first, second, and third husbands had not been happy ones. She must have

been very attractive in her youth, as her first lover threatened to kill himself if she would refuse him, and she married him out of compassion. A generous soul she was, but the ungrateful wretch made her life miserable, and finally ran away. Her second husband, who at the time of his betrothal to her showed no symptoms of a desire to commit suicide, was heard to curse the day that he was born, soon after the honeymoon. But why should we revive these painful memories, which Mrs. Honeycomb tried to forget?

Love of truth compels us, however, to state that at the time of which we are writing, Mrs. Honeycomb had not yet given up all hopes of finding her real affinity. She had accepted a call from Captain Bumpkins to become one of the high-priestesses of the Shrine, and a diploma that admitted her to the inner circle of the Elect, and was on her way to enter upon her duties. Whether or not dreams of the Elixir of Life and of rejuvenation entered into her programme, we are not permitted to tell.

"This Mr. Green," said Mr. Bottler, as he was walking upon the deck with Mrs. Honeycomb, "seems to be hallucinated. I am sure that there is not a word of truth in what he says."

"Men can never be trusted," answered Mrs. Honeycomb with a sigh, "and it may be that Mr. Green is just as bad as the rest of them. If I were a young girl, I would not believe a word of what any man said, unless I had the marriage certificate in my hand. They blow hot one day and cold the next, and even after the marriage they cannot be relied upon."

"I meant to say," continued Mr. Bottler, "that Mr. Green proposed to me"

"Did he, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Honeycomb, interrupting his sentence. "Well, I am not astonished at anything. You could hardly believe what queer things may happen to probationary Chelas. It must have been an evil spirit throwing

a glamour over his eyes to make him imagine you were a woman. Such things are often done by black magicians. My friend, the Countess Carnivalli, had a similar experience. She once thought she saw the spirit of an Adept walking in the yard, and when she ran out to meet him, it was only an old table-cloth that had been hung up to dry."

"I am glad to hear you express such good and sensible views," said Mr. Bottler. "All these spirits and ghosts are nothing but impostures and hallucinations, degrading to the dignity of man and destructive to the purity of women. The ancients believed in ghosts, but modern science has destroyed all such illusions. I have studied psychology thoroughly, and found that there is no such thing as a soul. Who ever saw a soul? It can be found neither in the pineal gland nor in the big toe. All thought is dynamic and molecular. It is produced by a hypertrophy of the ganglia of the brain. It is due to a condition caused by a spasmodic contraction of the dynamic centres of the cerebellum, in consequence of which the transversal oscillatory rhythmic movements of the interior vibrations of the brain cells are kinetically altered. If you will look at the oscillatory curves of the four dimensional extensions of the thought dynamides, you will see that thoughts are produced by an increased action of the motor nerves of the cerebellum, entirely analogous to the oxydation of zinc in a voltaic battery."

"I always thought so," replied Mrs. Honeycomb. "It's the best explanation I ever heard. My friend, the Countess Carnivalli, says the same thing whenever she is influenced by her guiding spirit. When he takes possession of her, he makes her vibrate like a battery, and when she speaks the whole audience becomes electrified."

"It's the air that acts as a conductor," said Mr. Bottler. "When the four dimensional movements of the transversal oscillations of the thought dynamides have once been started by the contact and galvanic action of the grey matter of the

brain with the blood corpuscles, the sympathetic impulses liberated in the mass of which the convolutions are composed may be transmitted to the auditory sense of the audience by means of the oscillations of the tympanum, and it is unnecessary to assume the action of spirits."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Honeycomb; "my husband was a conductor. Poor man! He did not know anything about such things, and so he used spirits. I always told him that it was unnecessary, but after he once got into the habit, he could not quit it, and it killed him at last."

"It is all due to a state of disturbed equilibrium," said Mr. Bottler.

"Perfectly true!" said Mrs. Honeycomb. "His equilibrium was sometimes so much disturbed that he tumbled from one side to the other. O! if I could find the man in whom equilibrium is restored, I would follow him to the end of the world. I would recognize in him the true affinity for which my soul is yearning."

"But, my dear madam," said Mr. Bottler, "it seems that we are talking about two different subjects. You are thinking of yearnings, while I am discussing the most profound philosophical questions."

"Oh, you men!" sighed Mrs. Honeycomb. "You will never understand a woman's heart!"

Consultation with Mrs. Honeycomb having proved unsatisfactory, Mr. Bottler turned again to Mr. Green, and the latter insisted that Mr. Bottler should go to Urur to see the Talking Image, which would undoubtedly clear up all his doubts. "This Image," he said, "is not an invisible spirit; but a substantial thing, made of some solid material, and it can think and talk like a human being."

"The construction of such an Image," said Mr. Bottler, "would go to prove the correctness of my theory about the thought dynamides. All we have to do is to construct a proper organism and to supply it with brain and blood in the

right proportions, and there will be no difficulty in causing it to evolve thoughts. Add to that the proper organs of speech, and you will have a Talking Image as complete as the one you describe. On my return from Madagascar I will go to Urur and examine the Image, and if it is what you represent it to be, I shall construct one like it and present it to the S.R.P.S."

"I will speak with Rataraborumatchi about it," replied Mr. Green, "and recommend you to his attention. He will grant you all the necessary facilities to bring your investigation to a successful result."

The steamer passed by the island of Formosa and entered the Chinese Sea. Soon the long low hills of the coast were seen and the number of fishing boats encountered increased until the sea seemed to be a forest of masts. After they entered the tortuous channel that leads to Hong Kong a great commotion took place among the Chinese on board, who seemed swayed by one common impulse, the joy of returning home. Many longing hearts were beating as the steamer approached the harbour; many anxious eyes were watching the ship from the shore; hundreds of boats swarmed out from the wharf and surrounded her, and when, after anchor was cast, the human tide overflowed the deck, while the landing took place, Pancho wrote a letter to his wife, from which we will copy the following :

"The nearer I come to the place of my destination, the more do I become convinced that it was necessary for me to go, so as to see with my own eyes whether or not those marvels are true. There is no dependence to be put on anything that any one hears. I have met with some scientific celebrities who differ in their opinions just as much as vulgar and ignorant people. Moreover I have met with two Chelas; but their statements are too absurd to be believed. I therefore am still far from a solution of the problem, and my heart beats with joy as I am coming nearer to the attainment of my object.

We are half way on our journey now, and I shall soon see the Talking Image and sit at the feet of the great Hierophant, listening to his instructions and receiving positive proof that man has a soul."

The rest of the letter contained such trifles as are usually talked of among lovers, and which it would be indiscreet to reveal.

During the last few days of the voyage, some learned discussions took place between Mr. Bottler and Green in regard to certain historical occurrences certified to in the Bible, in the reality of which Mr. Bottler fully believed, but which he explained on scientific grounds, meeting, however, occasionally with some difficulties. For instance, Mr. Bottler had no doubt that Jonah was swallowed by a fish, only he said that for some anatomical reasons it could not have been a whale, a mistake undoubtedly due to a mistranslation of the original text. He went into long speculations about Noah's ark and the system which the former had adopted to feed the different animals. He also made a project on his return to Europe to raise an army of volunteers to recapture the Castle of Zion, which, as he said, had been long enough in the hands of the infidels.

As to Mr. Green, he denied the truth of the Bible. He said that such a respectable person as the Virgin Mary is represented would surely have selected a more suitable place than a stable to give birth to her child, and that Jesus would not have ridden into Jerusalem on an untrained ass, because, if he had not been an expert in horsemanship, he would have been in danger of being thrown and making himself ridiculous in the eyes of the people. In fact, it seemed as if Rataraborumatchi's influence was already acting, as his Chela took actually to reasonings, while Mr. Bottler became daily more and more petrified in his own opinions.

Many philosophical interviews took place also between Mr. Bottler and Mrs. Honeycomb. The great scientist explained

to her his ideas about the fourth dimension of space, and proved to her the enormous progress which science had made since the days of Plato. He demonstrated clearly and beyond the possibility of a doubt that an average schoolboy of our days knows a great deal more than did Socrates or Pythagoras. As to Plato, he was an old imbecile, whose intelligence was surpassed even by that of Mr. Green.

While Mrs. Honeycomb listened with infinite patience to Mr. Bottler's explanations, which she neither understood nor cared to understand, the yearnings of her soul carried her mind far away to a more ideal realm, where she hoped to find her affinity. Pancho, as he came nearer to his destination, felt a more solemn influence pervading his being. He knew that he should now soon stand in the awful presence of Captain Bumpkins, the Hierophant, who would unveil before him the goddess of Nature, and introduce him to the Mysterious Brotherhood.

The ship now approached the African coast, and one day the island of Madagascar was reached, where Mr. Bottler left the ship to go to Tanarivo to hunt for his unicorn. He promised that after having accomplished his object he would come to Urur to investigate the claims of the followers of the Mysterious Brotherhood.

A few days more and a long blue line was seen, indicating land. Was it a part of the Lybian Desert where the sages dwell? Was that grey cloud on the western horizon hovering over the city of Kakodumbola, the abode of the Adepts?

Nearer and nearer; now the long hills with forests and houses could be plainly distinguished. Then the harbour appeared, and the city beyond, with its towers and palaces. Crowds of people were seen to walk about the shore watching the steamer, and among the boats that came and approached the ship there was one bearing a flag with the letters "S. D. W.," meaning "Society for the Distribution of Wisdom," written upon it.

"Stop!" The heavy engines which had laboured so long and faithfully ceased to work; a signal was given, and down came the heavy anchor, fastening its fangs in the deep.

The people from the boat of the S. D. W. came on board. They were members of that society, venerable Hottentots, Kaffirs, and Zulus, who gave a hearty welcome to our friends, and invited them into their boat to go ashore, where carriages were awaiting to take them further on to Urur.

They landed, and Pancho entered a carriage with one of the Zulus.

"I am exceedingly anxious to make the acquaintance of Captain Bumpkins," said Pancho, as they drove along the beach on the road to Urur.

"We hope," said the Zulu, after some hesitation, "that you will have some influence over him."

"How could I, a mere beginner, have any influence over the Hierophant?" asked Pancho astonished. "Is it not far more probable that I will have to sit at his feet and listen to his wisdom?"

"It is all very well," said the Zulu; "but, speaking confidentially, I will tell you that Bumpkins has some little peculiarities, and that we have stood his nonsense long enough; even the Hottentots will stand it no longer. We do not want to be made the laughing-stock for small boys and servant girls; we can see no wisdom in that. He wants us to march through the streets of the city, each one to wear a badge and a little flag in his hand. He means well enough; but we will not stand his nonsense, we won't! We hope that you will persuade him to give it up, or there will be a mutiny. This is all that I am permitted to say."

CHAPTER VII.

DESTROYED ILLUSIONS.

IF a thunderbolt coming from a clear blue sky had hit Pancho, he could not have been more surprised than he was at hearing these words of the Zulu. All his hopes had been centred upon the revelations which he expected to receive from the Hierophant, and now it dawned upon his mind that even Captain Bumpkins was only a human being, capable of having human idiosyncrasies and not absolutely infallible. This was actually like knocking away the last support upon which Pancho's belief in human authority rested ; for who was henceforth to be trusted implicitly, if even Captain Bumpkins was only a man ?

Pancho and his companion were now entering the suburbs of the city, driving along a road lined with Banyan trees. Gradually the houses became less numerous and assumed the aspect of a rural district. Here and there along the coast were some little villages inhabited by Hottentot fishermen, but occasionally they met the stately mansions of Europeans.

Pancho had said nothing for a while, being deeply absorbed in thought. He could not make the idea of parades, badges and little flags agree with his conception of the dignity of an Hierophant. Suddenly he asked :

“How can it be possible that the Hierophant gives such ludicrous orders ?”

"It is all the fault of Madame Corneille," answered the Zulu.

"Who is Madame Corneille?" asked Pancho.

"Do not let us speak about her," answered the Zulu. "The trees in this park have ears, the stones are listening, and what we say about her might be reported by the winds to the Mysterious Brotherhood."

They were now crossing a bridge leading over a river of considerable size. To the left was the ocean, and before them, bordered on one side by the river, was a beautiful park, planted with mango and cassurina trees, in the midst of which could be seen a white building in Moorish style.

"This," said the Zulu, pointing towards the building, "is the temple in which is the sacred Shrine where the Talking Image is kept. The little house at a distance is the residence of the Hierophant."

A short turn in the road brought them in front of a gate that opened through a stone wall surrounding the sacred precincts of Urur. As the horse entered through the gate, the animal took fright and attempted to run away; but being old and not of a very strong constitution, it was easily pacified by the driver.

The cause of this scare were two monstrous-looking things, made of blue paper and stuffed with straw. They stood at the sides of the entrance and were intended to represent elephants.

"What does this mean?" asked Pancho.

"They are the inventions of Madame Corneille, and have been put here as ornaments by Captain Bumpkins," answered the Zulu. "To-morrow is the celebration of the anniversary of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom."

"When is the next steamer going to leave for Europe?" asked Pancho.

"Next Monday," answered the Zulu. "If you have any

letters to send, you can mail them at the post-office in the village."

The trees of the park were decorated with paper lanterns and flags. To the right was a grove of cocoanut-trees, hedged in by a natural fence of prickly pears. Another turn of the road brought our friends within sight of the house, whose massive pillars shone brightly in the light of the setting sun. Its rays fell upon a woman standing upon the veranda, and Pancho knew instinctively that she could be nobody else but Madame Corneille.

Pancho and the Zulu alighted from the carriage and were welcomed by the housekeeper. She was a thin woman of more than middle age, and almost the counterpart of Mrs. Honeycomb, only her figure was smaller, her nose still more aquiline, and her eyes more protruding. As she ogled Pancho she seemed to take his measure with them, as if mentally preparing for battle. Shaking hands with him, she expressed a hope that they would soon become friends.

"I shall depend on your aid to enter the temple of knowledge," said Pancho.

"I have the key to it in my pocket," answered Madame Corneille.

The carriage containing Mr. Green and Mrs. Honeycomb now drove up. Mrs. Honeycomb alighted and embraced Madame Corneille, but when the latter extended her hand to Mr. Green, he refused to take it, and said with his usual gravity: "I am an accepted probationary Chela, and before I shake hands with you, I must first ask in what capacity you are in this house?"

"I am superintending the household affairs," answered Madame Corneille. "You had better make friends with me, if you want anything good to eat."

"Being the superintendent of the household," replied Mr. Green, "you are here in the position of a domestic, a position which is not sufficiently respectable to entitle you to shake

hands with probationary Chelas. I shall ask Captain Bumpkins how it comes that he permits his servants to make themselves so familiar with distinguished visitors."

Madame Corneille became purple with rage, but said nothing.

While Mr. Green was speaking, a young Hottentot, dressed in a long white gown, made his appearance.

"Lo!" she exclaimed. "Here comes the head Chela of this establishment;" and addressing the Chela, she called out: "Come here, Malaban, make your bow to the lady and gentleman."

Malaban crossed his hands over his breast and bowed politely. Mr. Green extended his hand to him, but Malaban did not take it.

"Excuse me, sir!" said Malaban, "we are not permitted to shake hands with Europeans."

"You see," said Madame Corneille to Pancho, "it is on account of the magnetism, and then some of these Europeans may have the itch, if not something worse."

"You can safely shake hands with me," said Mr. Green, addressing Malaban, "for I am myself an accepted probationary Chela."

"This I can hardly believe," said Malaban. "You do not look like one."

"I have a certificate from Rataraborumatchi to show it," replied Mr. Green.

"If he wrote such a thing," answered Malaban, "he must have meant it only in fun."

"How long have you been a Chela?" asked Mr. Green.

"This I am not permitted to tell," answered Malaban.

Pancho was going to ask him a question, but Madame Corneille said: "Do not ask him anything if you would not get fibs for an answer."

"Do Chelas ever tell fibs?" asked Pancho.

"They do not mean to do so," answered Madame Corneille.

"But they love the truth so much that they adorn it on every occasion."

"Where is the Hierophant?" asked Pancho.

"The what?—Oh, you mean Bumpkins, Captain Bumpkins," said Madame Corneille. "You will not see him to-night. Poor fellow! He has an awful toothache. He always sleeps at night with open windows and caught a cold."

"But why does he do that?" asked Pancho.

"He says," she answered grinning, "that it is to save the Mysterious Brothers the trouble to dematerialize themselves when they come to visit him in his dreams. But I will now show you to your rooms. Come, my dear Mrs. Honeycomb. I hear you are going to be initiated into the inner circle, and you will be entitled to a room in the upper story. Mr. Pancho has his room here to the right, and as to Mr. Green, we will put him away in a little garden house, where he can meditate without being disturbed."

Our friends were shown to their rooms. The one Pancho occupied commanded a fine view of the river and an island planted with trees.

Soon the bell rang, announcing that supper was ready. Pancho went to the dining-room where he met his friends, and also Madame Corneille and her husband. Malaban and the rest of the Chelas did not come. They ate in a separate room, being afraid of the magnetism of the Europeans.

Pancho had fallen too deep from his Olympian heights to care for tea or for sausage. His appetite had been destroyed by the two blue elephants at the gate and by the revelations made by Madame Corneille. He did not care to eat and hardly tasted his food in spite of the praises bestowed upon it by Mrs. Honeycomb and Madame Corneille.

"May I offer you a piece of beef or mutton?" asked Madame Corneille.

"No, thanks," answered Pancho. "I am a vegetarian."

"This is a poor country for growing vegetables," said

Madame Corneille. "They are awful scarce; only occasionally we get hold of a cabbage head," and addressing Mr. Green, she added: "Will you have some of this devilled ham?"

"I do not consider devilled ham proper food for Chelas," answered Mr. Green. "I am a lover of jam and vegetables. I do not see why the Mysterious Brothers do not make plenty of vegetables grow around here. It must be the easiest thing for them, as they can make mango-trees grow out of pine-boards."

"It takes such power even to cultivate a pumpkin," she replied.

"Did you ever see a Mango tree grow?" asked Mrs. Honeycomb, addressing Monsieur Corneille.

"*Nevarre!*" rolled out the latter individual.

"We hear so much of the wonderful feats performed in Africa," continued Mrs. Honeycomb. "Did you ever see Mr. Malaban go out in his astral body?"

Monsieur Corneille looked inquiringly at his wife, as if he did not know what to answer.

"Oh dear no!" answered Madame Corneille. "I do not want to see such a thing; it would frighten me to death. The poor boy is almost nothing but skin and bones, and if he were to go out in his astral body, there would be nothing left but a shadow."

"I should like to go out in my astral body," said Mr. Green.

"We won't permit it," answered Madame Corneille. "It would not do for people here to sneak about in their astral bodies and see what is going on," and addressing her husband, she said:—"Don't you think so, my dear?"

"*Nevarre,*" ejaculated Monsieur Corneille.

After supper Madame Corneille accompanied Pancho to his room to see whether everything was arranged according to her directions. They entered into a conversation about the

Mysterious Brotherhood, and Pancho asked her to tell him something about it.

"I am a Christian, and I do not like to have anything to do with such heathenish things. These Mysterious Brothers have several times frightened me nearly to death. I am not going to stand it much longer."

"But do you believe in the existence of those Brothers?" he asked.

"I know what I know," nodded Madame Corneille. "I do not believe that it is right to have anything to do with such things. How do we know that these Mysterious Brothers are not the very imps from Hell, or souls condemned to purgatory? I tell you, I have seen with my own eyes a broom become alive and sweep the room without any hand being attached to it, and now things begin to look serious. I do not object to innocent amusements such as fortune-telling by cards, by which good spirits may aid a person to take a look at the future; but—well, do not let us talk about it any more. . . ."

"I am sorry for it I should have been very much obliged to you for more information."

"You will find it out for yourself, by and by."

"Then do you mean to say," he asked, "that it is done by tricks, or by the work of the devil?"

"I am not going to accuse any one," replied Madame Corneille. "Do not ask me anything more about it."

"Do I understand you rightly that you can tell fortune by cards?"

"I have occasionally succeeded. I often tell it to Mr. Malaban."

"I wish you would try and tell me my fortune," said Pancho.

"If you desire it, we may make an attempt. . . ."

They took seats at the table, and Madame Corneille produced a pack of cards out of her pocket, handing them to Pancho

with a request to cut them. After this was done, she laid the cards out upon the table according to rule.

"The King of Hearts," she said, "is yourself ; for I see by the ring on your finger, that you are a married man. The Queen of Hearts is your wife. She is very beautiful."

"Indeed she is," replied Pancho.

"She is thinking of you very much," she continued.

"I constantly feel it," answered Pancho.

"It was an evil day for her when you left," went on Madame Corneille. "She will be exposed to a great danger. There's the knave of spades close to her, a very dangerous man, and the queen of spades is looking at her ; she is your wife's enemy."

"My wife has no enemies," he protested.

"I am not so sure," she said. "I do not always believe in the cards myself ; but we shall see. It seems that you have no children."

"None," answered Pancho.

"The ace of diamonds is not far from you. This would go to show that you are not in straitened circumstances."

"I have no cause to complain."

"I do not see any card that would indicate that you belong to a church," continued Madame Corneille.

"No, indeed ; I do not," answered Pancho.

"And you have no desire to join it?"

"Certainly not !"

"This card here," continued Madame Corneille, "indicates that you will get a letter, and that one"—pointing to another—"that you are going to make a voyage. This is all I can see to-night."

"I am very much obliged to you," said Pancho ; "but kindly give me some information about the 'Talking Image.'"

"I can tell you confidentially its history," grinned Madame Corneille. "It was once a human being like you or me. It was the daughter of an Arabian prince and a most beautiful

child. When she was about sixteen years of age she fell in love with one of the Djinns, a class of spirits that inhabit the desert. Grimalkin, the chief of the Djinns, took a fancy to her, and would have carried her off bodily, but he had a very jealous wife who was herself a very powerful spirit. Then the Djinn took out the heart of the girl, which he hid away in his bosom, leaving her body with all its intellectual powers behind, and the body deprived of the light of the spirit which resides in the heart turned to a stone-like mass, leaving her, however, alive and intelligent, and capable of reasoning. Now the Talking Image is, so to say, all brains, but no heart. Once a year, however, the Djinn is forced to bring back the heart and to let it shine within the Image; for if the light of the spirit were to be absent continually, even its intellect would die out like the glow of a wick from which the flame is extinguished, and which is no longer supplied with oil."

"This is a most wonderful story, If it were told to me by anybody but you, I would not believe it. But have you ever seen any of these Djinns?"

"Don't talk to me about them," said Madame Corneille, "the whole house is full of those Djinns; they give directions about the cooking, and make the Chelas do what they like; they will pull the bed-cover away from you when you are asleep, and touch you with ice-cold hands. Pooh! I do not want to say any more about them. Good-night!"

Madame Corneille left and Pancho remained alone. For a long time he stood at the window and looked out into the darkness beyond. A storm was gathering, thick clouds were covering the sky, and the mind of Pancho was heavily charged with doubts. What Madame Corneille had told him awakened again in him in full force the memory of Conchita, and he would have given worlds to know who was the knave of spades. He imagined he felt that there was some impending danger, and he argued with himself whether or not it would be best to return home immediately. He had now seen the

"elephant," not only one, but two; and, as Conchita had rightly predicted, it was time for him to return. What if Conchita were sick or dying, while he was running after a Mysterious Brotherhood that were nothing but a collection of spooks?

"O ye gods!" he exclaimed; "is this the outcome of the wisdom of the Adepts? A Hierophant parading the streets with a little flag in his hand, a Talking Image attended by spooks; Chelas who cannot open their mouths without telling a fib . . . Yes, is it for this that I have left my home?"

No! It could not be! "Surely," he said to himself, "there is some mistake which will be explained when I see the Hierophant."

Pancho felt no inclination to sleep. He went out into the park and wandered among the trees, although the night was dark and he could hardly see before him. The idea that he had committed a great mistake in coming to Urur, grew stronger and stronger in his mind as he pondered over it. At last a feeling of despair entered his soul, and, clenching his fist, he exclaimed: "O infinite, inconceivable and incomprehensible spirit of imbecility! what are you and what gave you power to turn me into a fool? Did I not always seek to know the truth, irrespective of any consequences that might result to me or to any one? Was I not always proud of my scepticism and incredulity? Nevertheless, I was stupid enough to believe in the absurd tales of Mr. Puffer. Where are the great beings that turn the world and cannot even make a cabbage-head grow in this garden? Who are those Adepts, full of divine wisdom, who come to give directions for the cooking to a Madame Corneille?"

Thus talking with himself, Pancho wandered away from the main building and came in the vicinity of a house of smaller dimensions. A light shining from an open window attracted his attention, and he beheld a man in the room where the light

was brightly burning. He seemed to be about fifty years of age ; but his face could not be clearly seen as it was bound up with a handkerchief. He held a paper in his hand, looking at it and making gesticulations. Presently, however, he looked up, and must have seen Pancho standing among the trees, for he dropped his paper and stared at him with surprise.

Then something curious happened. The man making a reverential bow and crossing his hands in oriental fashion over his breast, addressed Pancho in the following words :

“ O great Krashibashi ! Have I then at last found favour in your eyes ? For many years have I wished to see you. At last my prayer now seems granted and you have consented to appear in bodily form before your obedient servant. May I ask you to enter this humble room and accept a chair ? I shall immediately open the door.”

Pancho, seeing that this was evidently a case of mistaken identity, did not wish to intrude. He returned to his room and the sense of the ludicrous overcame his melancholy. There was now nothing to prevent him from sleeping. His doubts had vanished, and he was firmly convinced that he had been a fool.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ANNIVERSARY.

A TREMENDOUS noise, resembling the beating of tin pans, aroused Pancho from his slumber. It was the noise made by the native musicians whom the Hierophant had engaged for the celebration of the anniversary of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom. It seemed as if it were intended to frighten away the sun which was just rising and to drive him back into the abyss beyond.

Pancho arose, and as he stepped out on the veranda, he saw the same man who the night before had addressed him as Krashibashi, approaching the house. Soon after that, closely followed by Mrs. Honeycomb, he entered, and the latter introduced him to Pancho as Captain Bumpkins.

Captain Bumpkins, or as his many friends and admirers used to call him, "the Hierophant," was a man of remarkable and imposing appearance. Long, tall, exceedingly thin and bony, his skeleton frame seemed to be inhabited by a supernatural fire that gleamed through his black eyes, sunken deep within their orbits and overshadowed by dark bushy eyebrows. He was a man of about fifty years, but still full of vigour; and his martial bearing seemed to indicate that it would not be safe for any member of the S. D. W. to contradict him or to doubt the existence of the Mysterious Brotherhood. Nevertheless he was very kindhearted and goodnatured, and if it

was true that the Talking Image was all *brains* and no heart, it might be said with equal sincerity that the Hierophant was *all heart*; for he was exceedingly anxious to increase the welfare of mankind. There was nothing so ridiculous which he would not have undertaken to do, if it had seemed to him that humanity could be benefited thereby.

The Hierophant had one great hobby, and this hobby was "Magnetism"; in magnetism he saw the future Saviour of the world. According to his views there was nothing that could not be accomplished by magnetism; from the mending of a boot by the occult power of the Adept, up to making one's self invisible, a feat which seemed to Captain Bumpkins the *ultima thule* of all that could ever be accomplished by the future sages that were to be produced in the golden era which he was ready to inaugurate. Not only was the curing of all bodily ills a mere trifle to him, which in the near future would do away with all medical quackery, legalized or otherwise, but he thought there would not be the least difficulty in raising mankind up to the highest level of morality. To do this we had only to magnetise away the phrenological bumps of those who are affected with vicious propensities, and to cause appropriate bumps to grow by the same means on the heads of those who were deficient in virtue. Moreover the "mental magnetism" of which the Hierophant dreamed was a "carrier of mind," and consequently not only life, but thought, knowledge and divine wisdom could be imparted to all by one who knew how to magnetise properly, abundantly, and with sufficient force.

"All the ills which at present affect the world," he used to say, "are merely a product of the *disturbed equilibrium* of the world's magnetism. Let the magnetic currents react upon their magnetic intramolecular centres and the equilibrium be restored at their neutral points and you will be surprised at the result."

Mrs. Honeycomb fully agreed with the Hierophant in regard

to these points, and thus it may be seen that those who have accused Captain Bumpkins of being somewhat deficient in his judgement have been ill informed. He was a good reasoner and even a superficial glance at his benevolent face whenever he spoke on the subject of Occultism, would reveal the fact that he was one man among a thousand, one who fully realized that his sole destiny was the elevation of the human race.

The Society for the Distribution of Wisdom, of which Captain Bumpkins was the founder and president, was an organization having for its object the prosecution of philosophical researches and the advancement of humanitarian interests. As such it was a very good institution. It claimed to be based on universal freedom of thought, and there would have been nothing impracticable in that, if those who belonged to it had been capable of doing their own thinking. Unfortunately, however, such persons are rare and few, while those who are not in possession of real knowledge, and therefore not free of error, can no more live without creeds and adopted opinions than a fish without water. Thus the members of the Society did not accept the truth on the strength of their own perception; but they clamoured for well authenticated proofs of it (from the Mysterious Brotherhood), and thus they had given up their old superstitions, merely to replace them by new superstitions; for that which one imagines to know on mere hearsay, and belief in the veracity of a teacher, is not self-knowledge, and therefore merely an opinion, even if it is true.

The Society for D. O. W. had also among its members some persons of considerable spiritual unfolding and intellectual power; but the vast majority of its members were attracted by a desire to gratify their curiosity, and to obtain favours from the Mysterious Brotherhood.

A new light had appeared on the mental horizon of the world owing to the revelations made by the Talking Image;

but whenever such a light appears, it attracts, first of all, the curious, the fanatical, and those who are discontented with the world and with themselves. They wonder at the appearance of that light, and not understanding its nature, they invent the most ludicrous theories for its explanation, and it is their misrepresentations which bring the new doctrines into disrepute. Such was the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom, of which Captain Bumpkins was the head, and whom we have now introduced to the reader.

"I congratulate you," said Captain Bumpkins to Pancho, after the first salutations and talk about the weather were over, "that you have been selected by the Mysterious Brotherhood to carry on the work for the cause of the truth. The truth is the best thing in the world. We want nothing but truth! truth!"

"This is perfectly true," said Mrs. Honeycomb. "My friend, the Countess Carnivalli, used to say the same thing."

"Do you, then, really believe in the existence of a Mysterious Brotherhood?" asked Pancho.

"Believe it?" exclaimed the Hierophant. "I not only believe it, I know it. I have seen them and talked with them for hours. Only last night one of the greatest Adepts, and the most prominent member of the Mysterious Brotherhood, the great Krashibashi himself, came to me through the open window of my room, and I had a long chat with him that lasted till long after midnight, when he suddenly disappeared."

"Do these Adepts visit you often?"

"There is not a day in the year," answered Captain Bumpkins, "when I do not see some of them in their astral, and sometimes they come to me in their physical, forms. Occasionally, when they wish to talk to me, they take possession of somebody that happens to be around. Once I met Krashibashi in the form of an apple-woman; at another time he took possession of a policeman, and once I had a long talk with him while he got inside of a lightning-rod agent."

"How could you tell that it was Krashibashi talking to you?"

"He always gives me certain passwords and masonic signs, by which I can know who I am talking with," said the Hierophant. "This is just as good as if he were to show his diploma."

"You must have had some wonderful experiences in your life!"

"I have travelled a great deal," replied the Hierophant. "I have seen the burning bush in the desert, a species of *Eucalyptus* already known to Moses, and the man-eating *Dragonía purpurea*, a tree that swallows the children that are sacrificed to it. I have been all over Europe, eaten macaroni at Naples, and plum pudding in England; but there is nothing that surpasses the apple-dumplings in Germany."

"I thought that story of the burning bush was an allegory," interjected Pancho, but the Hierophant, whose mind was absorbed in the recollections of his voyages, continued:

"I tell you, these apple-dumplings are made in a very peculiar manner. I have tried my best to get those African cooks to make them after the *receipt* I brought with me from Germany, but so far without success. They make them either too tough or too soft."

"I would like to make the acquaintance of these Mysterious Brothers," tried Pancho again.

"I used to say to them," went on the Hierophant, "give me apple-dumplings or death; but it is of no use; they will not depart from their African style of cooking."

"They look real nice in their astral bodies," said Mrs. Honeycomb, "provided that they are not too much dematerialized to be seen."

"What is the best way to develop one's spiritual perceptions, so as to enter into communication with the Mysterious Brotherhood?"

"I have an excellent magic mirror, a genuine mountain

crystal from Arkansas," said the Hierophant. "It is well magnetized. It cost me fifteen dollars, and I will let you have it for the same price."

"I have seen such mirrors," said Pancho; "but how can anybody tell whether what he sees in them is true?"

"If you think fifteen dollars too much, I will let you have it for twelve," said the Hierophant; "but actually I could not go down another cent. Mirrors of that kind are the most reliable ones that can be found anywhere."

"I meant to say," replied Pancho, "that I have been told that it is necessary to attain a certain degree of spiritual perfection to enter into communication with the Mysterious Brotherhood; I cannot see how that can be done by looking into a mirror."

"It is all done by self-hypnotization," answered Captain Bumpkins. "There is no better way to hypnotize one's self than such a mirror. I have seen people that could not look in a crystal for ten minutes without falling asleep. I tell you what I will do. You may have it for ten dollars; but this is my last word."

"Mr. Green will take it for that," said Mrs. Honeycomb.

"But I am not disputing the value of the mirror at all. What are ten dollars, if one can obtain self-knowledge for it? Money is only an illusion."

"I do not agree with you about that," said the Hierophant. "I know there are some philosophers who teach such stuff, but they do not believe it themselves. I once knew a philosopher who said that money was an illusion, and when somebody took away five dollars from him, you should have seen the fuss he made." Here the Hierophant shook himself with laughing.

"I could have told you so," agreed Mrs. Honeycomb.

"Perhaps the philosopher was himself an illusion, and needed money as such."

"No, sir," exclaimed the Hierophant. "He was not an

illusion, but a solid fellow weighing nearly two hundred pounds. He once stepped upon my foot, and I tell you that was no illusion."

"Is there any way of joining that Mysterious Brotherhood?" asked Pancho.

"To do so you will have to become an Adept."

"How is that done?"

"I dare say," explained Bumpkins, "you know what is meant by the term 'Suggestion.' In ordinary cases a magnetizer suggests to a patient that he is well, and then the patient gets well. In cases of adeptship, the person magnetizes himself and suggests to himself that he is an Adept, and when the suggestion is strong enough he becomes one. Of course, if you can get one of the Brothers to magnetize you, the thing will be done much quicker."

"I wish you would get a Brother to magnetize me," said Mrs. Honeycomb.

"They always select for that the best people. If you want to attract their special attention, I advise you to join our moral regiment."

"What is the moral regiment?" asked Pancho.

"It is a new institution which I have recently organized after the pattern of the Salvation Army," said Captain Bumpkins. "It is made up of people who sign a pledge that they will lead a moral life. Each soldier of the regiment is entitled to wear a badge to show that he is of a good moral character. Any one who does not tell a lie for a year becomes an officer and may carry a wooden sword. He has then to carefully watch the conduct of his company, and if any soldier is caught in telling a fib, that person will have to pay a fine."

"I suppose that the Mysterious Brothers could tell immediately if any one told a lie? They would make very good officers."

"Last night," answered the Hierophant, "I offered to Krashibashi the generalship of the regiment, and he promised

to accept it. He will find out immediately if any one tells a lie. These Mysterious Brothers know everything; they can see at any time what is going on in the most distant parts of the globe. They have hundreds of times reported to me things that were taking place in far-off countries, and I always found their accounts correct."

"I wish you would ask Krashibashi whether everything is all right in my house," said Pancho.

"The Brothers, my dear sir, do not meddle with trifling affairs. I would not dare to ask them such a question; they would get awfully angry. They never give any advice or orders except in cases of the greatest importance, when the interests of humanity as a whole are at stake. On such occasions they may write an occult letter or appear personally."

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Honeycomb. "How I wish I could have a talk with a Brother!"

"There is one standing in that corner behind the tree just now," said the Hierophant, pointing in the indicated direction; "I see him nod his head; he hears every word you say."

"The Lord have mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. Honeycomb. "I cannot see a thing. I wish my friend the Countess Carnivalli were here!"

There the conversation ended because Bumpkins was called away. The park became alive with guests, nearly all being members of the Society for Distribution of Wisdom; the rest of them were visitors or aspirants who were not yet in possession of a diploma. The soldiers of the moral regiment wore yellow badges, and their officers could be recognized by wearing badges of larger size and wooden swords. Madame Corneille was distributing little yellow flags which the members of the S. D. W. were to carry in their hands during the public parade which was going to take place in the city.

There were, however, some who showed symptoms of insubordination and refused to take the badges and flags. They

soon flocked together into a group and consulted with each other. Finally they selected Mr. Green to draw up a protest against the blue elephants and the flags which was to be presented to Bumpkins. When everything was prepared, the Hierophant was informed that some of the members desired to present a petition to him. Everybody then proceeded to the great Hall of the building. Captain Bumpkins placed himself on a kind of a throne, and Mr. Green began to read as follows :

"The Elephant is a sagacious animal. Its usual colour is grey, and there are also white and black elephants ; but nobody ever saw one that was blue"

Mr. Green had hardly time to read so far when the sound of a gong was heard, coming from the direction of the temple. Immediately the cry arose : " A message from the Shrine !—A message from the Shrine !" Mr. Malaban then entered the room in hot haste, holding in his hand a paper which he presented to the Hierophant. It was an occult letter. The whole of the assembly arose and listened in breathless silence to hear the message from the Mysterious Brotherhood. Thrice the worthy president bowed his venerable head ; he then took the paper from the hands of the Chela, and after placing it upon his forehead in sign of respect, he opened the letter and read :

"The elephants and the flags may be dispensed with ; but the badges and the music must remain.

"**KRASHIBASHI.**"

"This settles the question," said the Hierophant. "The meeting is dissolved."

Great was the joy of the Zulus to see that their wish had been granted. Some strong and courageous men were immediately dispatched to execute the unfortunate victims. They did their work well. For months afterwards the corpses of

the two beasts could be seen lying on the ground, their legs stretched up in the air, their blue paper skins torn and rotting in the sun and rain, and the straw sticking out of their digestive organs.

The wisdom of this decision of the Mysterious Brotherhood was self-evident. The importance of the occasion was indisputable and justified the interference of supernatural powers. A mutiny had threatened to break out in the Society for Distribution of Wisdom and damage its authority—a circumstance which might have done untold harm to the progress of the cause of truth, and been detrimental to the highest interests of humanity ; but the wise decision of the Adepts quelled the disturbance. It satisfied the discontented by doing away with the flags and the elephants, and still it confirmed the authority of Captain Bumpkins, and soothed his feelings by granting to him the badges and the music. “No one but gods could have made such a decision,” gravely remarked Mr. Green.

“This dissatisfaction among certain of our members,” explained Bumpkins, “is the work of black magicians. I am sorry for these people, but I hope to bring them to repentance.”

“How sensitive these Brothers must be,” said Mrs. Honeycomb. “We read here at Urur a petition to the Mysterious Brotherhood, and immediately the sound of our voices is wafted on astral waves for thousands of miles over the desert into the far-off Nigris Mountains to Kakodumbala, the city of the Adepts. It reaches the astral tympanums of the Brothers and immediately they send an occult letter. I must write about this to my friend the Countess Carnivalli. She will be very much astonished.”

“This is not the way it is done,” said Bumpkins. “There was an astral Chela present, listening to what was said. I saw him standing behind your chair.”

“Oh, dear !” exclaimed Mrs. Honeycomb. “What a pity that I did not know it !”

"But was not the document signed by one of the Brothers?" asked Mr. Green.

"That does not make any difference," said Bumpkins. "Accepted Chelas are authorized to sign the names of their Masters to any document they like."

Mr. Green was not quite satisfied with this arrangement; but, being unacquainted with the code of laws of the Mysterious Brotherhood, he had no right to object.

More members and strangers arrived, and it was a great sight to see so many different nationalities intermingled. There were Brahmins from Asia and distinguished people from Europe, Zulus, Kaffirs, and Hottentots and a few savages from Australia. Ladies and gentlemen in elegant clothes side by side with the half-nude natives of Africa. There were Christians and Jews; Mohammedans and fire-worshippers. One raven-black African princess in her native costume could be seen walking arm-in-arm with a beautiful European, and the dark skin of the African formed a strange contrast with the peach-blossom complexion of the European girl. Such a sight is to be seen hardly anywhere except at the annual gatherings at the Shrine of Urur.

The Talking Image had expressed a desire not to be bothered, and therefore the great meeting where the speeches were to be made did not take place within the sacred precincts of the temple, but in a temporary building which had been constructed expressly for that purpose, in a distant part of the park. At the appointed hour the procession formed and walked into that building. First came two native policemen, and then the music. Then came the Hierophant dressed in oriental costume with a turban upon his head. After him came Malaban and the rest of the Chelas, accepted, probationary and titular ones, including Mrs. Honeycomb, Pancho and Mr. Green. After this came the *crethi* and *phleti* of the Society for Distribution of Wisdom, including a great number of small boys, and at last followed the invited guests. The President took

his seat ; the scribes dipped their pens into the ink, and after order was restored Captain Bumpkins delivered his speech.

We will not attempt to reproduce in full all the eloquent words which Captain Bumpkins spoke on this solemn occasion. There was a great deal of truth in what he said and also a great deal of error. There was a great deal of exaggeration in the statements he made ; but this circumstance was evidently not due to any wilful misrepresentation of facts ; but rather to a too vivid imagination. He alluded with pride to the progress which the Society for Distribution of Wisdom had made during the past and which was especially due to the revelations that had been given to the world through the instrumentality of the Talking Image, whose utterances were then attracting the attention of the world, and the most distinguished people from all parts of the globe were now coming to join the society.

Only yesterday Pancho, a distinguished stranger, had come, attracted by the unselfish desire of enlightening mankind and to benefit humanity by fighting for the cause of the truth. With him had come Mr. Green, a well-known scientist and a man of unusual intelligence. He had laid away his numerous titles, to enlist under the flag of Wisdom and to become a probationary Chela in the Mysterious Brotherhood, of which he was already a titular member. He was the kind of man that was wanted in the coming battle for truth, and as he—Captain Bumpkins—was looking with a clairvoyant eye into the future, he could foresee the day when Mr. Green would become president of the Society for Distribution of Wisdom, after he, the present occupant of that chair, was laid away in his grave.

A great applause followed, and the Hierophant, overcome by emotion, wiped a tear from his cheek. After a while he continued :

“Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters and children ! I address you all without any distinction of colour or race ; for in the Society for Distribution of Wisdom all are equals and have equal

rights. We are not merely a brotherhood, but also a sisterhood, a childrenhood, a neighbourhood, a universal family of harmonious minds. Upon us and upon us only are centred the hopes of the world. Millions of longing eyes are directed towards the S.D.W., thirsting for wisdom. Where, oh, where shall they obtain it? There have been wise men in the world attempting to teach the truth. But how can the world at present know whether or not they were to be believed, or their assertions reliable? What were their credentials? Who vouched for their veracity? Alas, echo answers 'who!' Some of them worked miracles; but those miracles could only be proofs to those who personally witnessed them. The accounts of them may have been exaggerated; they were not always produced under test conditions. Moreover, the people in ancient times not being versed in hypnotism and magnetism, may have regarded certain things as miraculous which appear to us perfectly natural. The transmutation of water into wine, for instance, is a feat that may have appeared wonderful to the Canaanites, but to-day every dealer in liquor is in possession of this secret. In many instances it has been positively proved that the accounts in the Bible regarding certain miracles are inaccurate. Now a days it is known to every child in the street that the 'snake' which tempted Eve in Paradise was no snake at all, but a *Pterodactyle*, an animal which looks like a dragon; also that the trumpets, at whose voice the walls of Jericho fell, were fitted with a very ingeniously-constructed mechanism, resembling that which has recently been discovered by Mr. John Worrell Keeley.

"Now, however, a new instrument for revelation has been given to the world by the Mysterious Brotherhood, an instrument whose veracity no sane person can doubt, and whose infallibility is self-evident to all thinkers. I cannot omit expressing my impatience and indignation when I hear the speculations of our so-called philosophers, who attempt to find out by their own thinking the mysteries of nature and man.

It cannot be denied that some of them have had some tolerably good ideas, even approaching the truth ; but I say, let those people wait patiently until the Talking Image has had its say, and they may then go to sleep, satisfied that what it has said is true.

“ Let me ask you in all sincerity : What is the use of any one trying to do his own thinking, if he has a Mysterious Brother who can give him all the information he wants and whose veracity can be relied upon ; an Adept, I say, who can magnetize knowledge into his brain much faster than he could ever learn it by going through all sorts of experiences ? Do those people who want to find out everything themselves, imagine that they are wiser than the Mysterious Brotherhood ? Do those sceptics and scoffers believe that they can teach an Adept ? Villains and rogues they are, sunk in the swamp of materialism and doubt. Their day of reckoning is near, when they will be rooted out of existence.

“ But what words, ladies and gentlemen, will be adequate to describe the self-sacrificing spirit of ladies of rank and position, who have sacrificed the comfort of a luxurious home, renounced their social standing, and even the delights of married life, to come to Africa for the benefit of humanity ? They are like beautiful angels coming to save this sinful world. It is certainly incredible that there are ladies, even this day, who would do such a thing, and nevertheless it is true, too true, for such a lady is right in our midst. Her name is Mrs. Honeycomb, whom I now have the honour to introduce to you. She is a graduate of a well-known boarding-school in England. For many years she has faithfully stood by the side of her husband, and as he has now gone to that bourne from which no traveller returns, she has resolved to remain single and to sacrifice her life to the cause of the truth.”

A tremendous applause followed and Mrs. Honeycomb hid her face in her handkerchief. She was too full of emotion to speak. What the Hierophant had said about her was not

doing her justice, although he may have imagined it to be true. If she had wanted to speak, she might have told a different tale.

It has not been decided whether it was a good or an evil spirit that then and there put the idea into the mind of the Hierophant to request Mrs. Honeycomb to make a speech. At all events he did so.

"Oh, dear," said Mrs. Honeycomb, "I do not know what to say."

"Never mind," whispered Captain Bumpkins; "the Brothers will put the words into your mind."

Thus encouraged, Mrs. Honeycomb arose.

"Ladies and gentlemen," she said; "I am a defender of women's rights. If I ever had to submit to be married again, I would take care of having my own separate rights. I would not let any man get the best of me again. This is all I have to say."

Mrs. Honeycomb sat down under a storm of applause.

"The eloquent words of Mrs. Honeycomb," now spoke Captain Bumpkins, "contain a great deal of truth. We want the freedom of women. We are for perfect equality of the sexes."

A general hurrah arose from the members of the Society for Distribution of Wisdom, and the Hierophant continued:

"The words which our sister, Mrs. Honeycomb, spake will be printed to reverberate throughout the world. The sentiments which she expressed will find their echo at Washington, London and Paris. Men and women are separate beings and therefore they must have separate rights. In fact it would perhaps be best if they would remain separate altogether. I know of more than one fine fellow whose prospects of becoming a Chela have been entirely spoiled by his having a wife. Confound these women! They are an everlasting botheration and a drawback in the attainment of the honours which may be bestowed by the Mysterious Brotherhood."

Mr. Green here rose and asked whether no exceptions were ever made to that rule and no special permits granted. He said he had heard of a powerful Adept who was all his life in love with a lady whose name was *Sophia* and that this circumstance did not interfere with his being promoted to the highest degree that can be conferred by the Mysterious Brotherhood.

The deafening uproar which these words elicited cannot be described. The members of the Society for Distribution of Wisdom, especially the small boys, shouted and whistled, clapped their hands and threw their hats and turbans into the air. The assembly resembled a congregation of maniacs.

During this time Mr. Green looked more solemn than usual. He felt the dignity of a future Hierophant swelling within his breast. He congratulated himself for having come to Urur. What a prospect was there open before him !

More than once his shortsighted relatives had prophesied to him that he would never come to anything in the world, that he was useless and incapable ; so that now he revelled in the anticipation of the joy of seeing them confounded on the day when he would return and give them proofs of his occult powers.

On this occasion Pancho's interior eyes were also open to an extent. Even without the aid of a magic mirror he could see that the Society for Distribution of Wisdom was not exactly what he had imagined it to be. He could see that there were few persons, if any, who cared anything for truth for its own sake, but only for the benefits that would arise from its possession. He knew that it was not the only desire of benefiting humanity that had caused him to come to Urur, but that he hoped to obtain knowledge in regard to certain mysterious things which might be useful to him, and he was aware that neither Mr. Green nor Mrs. Honeycomb would have come to Africa if they had not expected to profit by the visit.

After a pause the Hierophant continued his speech. He said that he had received reliable information from the

Mysterious Brotherhood, that a band of black magicians were leagued together, bent on the destruction of the Society for Distribution of Wisdom, and that the Adepts had given him orders to establish a Secret Committee of Defence to devise and employ means by which the schemes of these sorcerers could be frustrated and they themselves be confounded and annihilated. He said that the best members of the S.D.W. should be selected to serve on that committee and he therefore appointed Mrs. Honeycomb, Pancho and Mr. Green.

The important announcement created a great sensation among the members of the S.D.W., and the hearts of many were oppressed with dark forbodeings of coming evil events, but there were also some who were discontented and felt themselves slighted for not having been appointed to that committee and some of them even threatened to give to the Hierophant "a piece of their mind."

At the end of the meeting the president gave out the subject of a prize-essay on the following question of occult dynamics :

"If there is a church with two steeples of equal dimensions, and the bells are all hung in one steeple only, and none in the other, what will be, when these bells are rung, the consequence of this disturbance of equilibrium, in its physical, metaphysical and occult aspects?"

The writer of the best essay on this mysterious problem was promised the privilege of wearing a cocked hat with a feather.

Then the subject of the phenomena of dreams was broached.

"A friend of mine," said Mr. Green, "dreamt of five numbers. He thought of putting them into the lottery, but neglected to do so on that day. On the following he went to the lottery office, but arrived too late ; it was on a Saturday evening and the office was closed. On the following Monday the bulletin appeared where the numbers that had been drawn were recorded, and among them there was not a single one of those which he had dreamt about."

"To a superficial observer," remarked the Hierophant,

"this might go to prove that there are unreliable dreams ; but what proof have you that those numbers did not come out in some other lottery, or at some other time? If your friend had put these numbers in every lottery in the world and kept on putting them in, they might have come out after all."

After this conversation Pancho retired to his room. All that he had seen and heard had only served to confirm him in his opinion that there was no such thing as a Mysterious Brotherhood, or that, if it existed, it must be something very different from what it had been represented to him by Mr. Puffer and Captain Bumpkins. "Could it be possible that such exalted beings should engage in such puerilities?" he asked himself. "Can it be imagined that persons in possession of supreme wisdom should refuse to do something useful, but find time to descend from the Nigris mountain to give orders about blue elephants? Oh, the imbecility of these Brothers! If they are such as Captain Bumpkins describes, how great must it be!"

Mr. Green entered the room.

"Brother Pancho," he said, "we have both been greatly honoured in being appointed members of the Secret Committee of Defence against Black Magicians. What a sensation it will create among my friends! I will immediately telegraph the news to London."

"You had better wait," answered Pancho, "for the committee is a secret one and if the black magicians find out the names of the members, it might go hard with you."

Mrs. Honeycomb entered. Being a member of the S.C.D.B.M., she was entitled to take part in the consultation.

"The first thing to be done," she said, "is to find out who the black magicians are. I therefore propose to get a good magic mirror and to see how they look. It is extremely difficult to fight against a man unless you can see him and know who he is."

"Who knows?" said Mr. Green, "there may be some of them right here in this room."

"We must keep them out from here, then," said Mrs. Honeycomb. "I am going to put a vessel of vitriol in my room to keep them away."

"I believe," said Mr. Green, "the best plan will be to take a strictly legal course and hand them over to the authorities."

"It would take an astral policeman to catch the astral body of a wizard," replied Mrs. Honeycomb. "I am not afraid of any man, if he comes to me in his physical form. Let them come to me bodily and I will show them how I can deal with men. I will make them slink into a corner, the nasty curs! But, of course, if we have to deal with astral bodies, that is a different thing."

At this moment Mr. Green observed Madame Corneille standing near the open door, and it seemed to him that she had been listening. He became very indignant.

"What are you doing here?" he said. "This is a private meeting of a committee and we do not want any servants eavesdropping."

Madame Corneille was going to answer, but Mr. Green slammed the door in her face, and she went away, menacing, in the direction of the temple.

As may be supposed, the appointment of the Committee of Defence against Black Magicians formed the main topic of conversation on that day in Urur, and if those villains could have had the power to go about in their invisible astral bodies and to listen to what was said, they would certainly have been amused to hear the various plans that were proposed to effect their destruction. Some persons thought that these magicians were *Doug-Pa's* residing in the Gobian desert; others imagined that they could be found in London among the members of the Society for the Discovery of Unknown Sciences; and again others believed that it was a Society of the Jesuits who had an eye upon the destruction of the Society for Distribution of

Wisdom. Only one little lady, the one described above as having a peach-blossom complexion, had a theory of her own, and while sitting at the dinner-table she whispered to Pancho, who was next to her, "I know who these black magicians are. They are—Madame Corneille and her familiars."

CHAPTER IX.

THE TALKING IMAGE.

CLOSE by the riverside, and overshadowed by high eucalyptus and cedar trees in the park of Urur, there is a curiously shaped building. It is built like a Chinese pagoda, three stories high, each story having a projecting roof, on the top of which is a large gilded globe. A narrow winding staircase leads to the top story of the building. On the second floor a side door opens into the room where reside Mr. Malaban and Ram, two Chelas, guarding the stairs that lead still higher up to the sacred room, called "the Shrine," where the Talking Image is kept. Nothing extraordinary is seen in the room of the Chelas; there are only a few mats and tiger skins. Books, tobacco-pipes and writing materials are scattered over the floor. Tables and chairs are absent, for they are quite unnecessary for those who are accustomed to sit in oriental fashion squatting upon the ground.

The top story of the building contained the Talking Image, the jewel of the Society for Distribution of Wisdom. This room was the sanctuary of the pagoda. It was built in the shape of an octagon, its ceiling was a high vault, painted in blue with golden stars, representing the twelve signs of the Zodiac, while in the midst was the emblem of the Sun with an eye in it. This represented universal Consciousness, and the eye was surrounded by a triangle, the representation of form.

The walls were hung with dark tapestry, ornamented with magical signs. There were Persian mats and Indian shawls, arms and ornaments of various savage nations and a number of stuffed animals, including a gorilla, a pelican, and the skin of a cobra. There was only one window on the eastern side looking towards the river, and a soft light fell through its stained glass upon an object that stood motionless in the centre of the room, while all around it was semi-darkness and gloom.

This object was the Talking Image itself.

Various attempts have been made by prominent writers to give a fair description of the Talking Image and its natural history; but none of them have been successful, nor is there much hope that we shall succeed in this task, unless the readers will permit us to employ our clairvoyant powers; and even then the success will be doubtful. Nevertheless, we will try:

Standing upon its pedestal it was an imposing figure, resembling somewhat a woman in a state of trance. Usually there was to all appearance, no life about it except its head. From the eyes downward it seemed to be dead, immovable, heartless and petrified. From the eyes upward it was alive, at times conscious, and sometimes even of superhuman intelligence. The statue seemed made of stone; still there was a brain in it, capable of reasoning and thinking. All this apparent immovability was, however, merely an illusion. In reality the Image was a compound of living and conscious elemental principles, which had, so to say, crystallised into a compound organism of a very singular nature; and, as a magnet attracts iron filings and fixes them upon its surface, in a similar manner the elemental principles composing the body of the Image would attract to themselves corresponding intelligent principles of various grades and characters from the unseen world.

Thoughts are things, and therefore they are subject to the law of attraction and repulsion. They are like all other

things governed by the law of harmony and the law of induction. Thoughts existing in the minds of those who were near, and even of those who were distant, would, on reaching the Image, act upon corresponding elements within the stone-like mass, and as a mirror reflects the objects in its vicinity, likewise the statue would reflect the thoughts of persons whether present or absent. Nor was it at all necessary that such persons should themselves be conscious of the thoughts which they projected upon the Image; on the contrary, the latter seemed to be impressed especially powerfully by the thoughts that came, so to say, from the *heart* and not from the brains of others, and it gave utterance to such thoughts in speech and, occasionally, in writing.

Therefore its utterances were, at times, a reflection of the interior states of those who were *en rapport* with the Image; but at other times phenomena of a superior order took place. On such occasions a light of a seemingly supernatural kind, coming, not from the heart, but from the outside, seemed to enter and to illuminate that brain. Then the grey and immovable eyes would brighten, as if they belonged to a human being, capable of feeling and subject to emotions, and on such occasions the Image would speak words of great wisdom that astonished the world and perplexed the scientists and philosophers. But when that Light was entirely absent, and only weak-minded and superficial persons were present, it would be either entirely silent or merely echo back the words of the latter.

Being like a mirror, it would reflect truly the best as well as the worst traits of those who stood before it. It was at once the pride and the despair of its friends, and an object of scorn for its enemies; for neither the one nor the other understood its true nature. It seemed to be like all human beings of a dual nature or possessed of two polarities; but while in human beings there is usually no marked line of distinction between the high and the low, it seemed as if in the Image

the two natures had become separated from each other. It was in fact like an animal and a god, without the intermediary human element between the two poles.

The nature of the material of which it was composed was an object of continual quarrel among scientists, and has never been satisfactorily explained. It seemed to be stone and yet still it could not be stone of a usual kind. It was as if it were made of a substance composed of a great number of living beings of an unknown kind, in a state of sleep or petrification, from which they could be temporarily awakened when that superior light radiated on the brain. It then seemed as if each of these component parts had a life of its own, and could act independently of the organism of the Image. It was even said that on certain occasions some of these integral parts had separated themselves from the Image, and could act intelligently at a distance, but had to return again, in the same sense as we may send a thought to a friend in a distant country, which may enter the consciousness of that friend, while, at the same time, we do not lose the thought, for it resumes its place in our memory after the service is rendered. But while the thoughts of ordinary human beings are not self-conscious, but reflect merely the consciousness of the sender, the thoughts thus emanating from the Image were said to be made self-conscious by the power of that mysterious Light, so that they could act, as it were, independently of the Image and do many queer things.

Such phenomena, however, did not take place under all circumstances. Sometimes the Image answered questions, and at other times it remained obstinately silent. A series of scientific experiments were made by eminent scientists, under the supervision of the Hierophant, for the purpose of determining the cause of this instability. Barometrical, thermometrical, hygrometrical, electrical and magnetic observations and measurements were taken; but no satisfactory conclusions were arrived at. The Talking Image seemed to

care nothing for scientific conditions ; but proved to be fickle-minded and to have a will of its own. At present the scientific experiments were discontinued, and the mechanism of the Image was authoritatively declared to belong to the region of the Unknowable in Nature.

Captain Bumpkins, however, being of a scientific turn of mind, had not yet given up all hope to find out how the mechanism worked. He had applied to the Society for the Discovery of Unknown Sciences at London to send him a man who was an expert in such matters, to examine the Image ; and not long after the arrival of our friends, the Hierophant received information that a Mr. Bottler, a member of that Society, who had made himself quite celebrated by the discovery of some remnants of the Tower of Babel, and of some petrified wood of Noah's Ark, would be sent to explore the mystery. Captain Bumpkins was anxiously awaiting his arrival.

However, we will not anticipate the regular course of events.

While the Hierophant is enjoying his dinner with his guests, we will step into the sacred room and see what is taking place. Everything is silent there ; only the rush of the water in the swiftly-flowing river below, and occasionally the shout of a fisherman, is heard, for the noise of the crowd in the park does not penetrate into this place, and the native musicians are resting from their exhaustive muscular labour. Presently the door opens, and Madame Corneille enters. She throws a shy glance around, and silently closes and locks the door. Then, approaching the Image, she addresses the latter, commanding it in a stern voice to "awaken !"

A commotion seems to take place within the Image. A shadow of disgust and contempt creeps over its face. It does not move its lips, but a hollow voice, coming apparently from the base of the Image, answers :

"Begone !"

"I shall not begone," answered Madame Corneille. "I

know the secret of your composition, and I can manage some of the devils that have possession of you. Keep quiet, or I shall speak the word that will dissolve you into thin air."

"What do you want?" sounded the voice.

"I want to remain what I am," answered Madame Corneille. "I am the mistress of this place. I have power over the blustering Hierophant, and the Chelas crawl at my feet; but now a worm has crossed my path, and I must make him obedient like the rest. Mr. Green has been impudent to me. Put him down."

While Madame Corneille was speaking, the lower parts of the statue seemed to become alive, a cloud issued from its base, and became more and more dense, until it shaped itself into a curious being, which was neither an animal nor a man. It was rather of a ludicrous than of a terrible aspect, resembling, to a certain extent, a human being of minute proportions; but its head was that of a bird of prey, with big protruding goggle eyes; while its long spindle legs ended in web-footed extremities like those of a goose. When the monster was fully formed, Madame Corneille laid a sheet of paper before it, and directly her thoughts became expressed upon the paper in writing. When the writing was finished, the Elemental again dissolved into a cloud, which entered into the body of the Image. During this process the Image seemed to be perfectly dead; but when the Elemental had returned to its place, the eyes of the Image shone with a faint spark of life.

Madame Corneille folded the paper in the shape of a letter, and deposited it at the feet of the statue. Smiling contentedly, she then retired as noiselessly as she had come. But the Image did not stir; only the expression of pain which rested upon its face during the presence of Madame Corneille faded away, and was replaced once more by that of repose.

About an hour after this event a procession was seen to go

towards the temple. It consisted of a number of persons among which were our friends, Mrs. Honeycomb, Pancho, and Mr. Green, who having been duly tested and examined, and not found wanting, were now to be initiated by Captain Bumpkins into the secrets of the Mysterious Brotherhood. Mr. Ram, who walked at the head of the procession, carried the unavoidable flag, and Mr. Malaban the utensils necessary for fumigation, to drive evil spirits away. In the midst of the crowd walked the Hierophant.

The procession ascended the stairs and entered the room of the Image. The Chelas prostrated themselves before it, and Captain Bumpkins followed their example, looking like a fish out of water as he floundered upon the floor. Mr. Green, too, made an effort to do likewise, but remembering the dignity due to his future position, he stopped and merely made a reverential bow. Mrs. Honeycomb made a nice curtsy, giving to the Image the sweetest of her smiles practised expressly for that purpose, and Pancho waited to see what was coming. He had still great doubts in regard to the existence of the Mysterious Brotherhood, but hated to give up his illusion. Now the time for a final decision had come. Now or never would these secrets be revealed to him.

The Chelas arose. Captain Bumpkins resumed his former position. The initiation began.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the Hierophant, "this is the most solemn day in my life, as I have the honour of introducing you to the Talking Image of Urur. It is perhaps the greatest curiosity in the world, and there are thousands of people who would be willing to give their bottom dollar to see it. About its natural history little is known ; I captured it myself in the interior of Africa, with a great deal of danger to myself, and brought it here at a considerable expense. You may touch it, to see that it is made of solid material and that there is no trickery about it, though it is able to talk. If it were necessary I could produce certificates from persons of very

high standing, to prove its solidity. I have exhibited it before a great number of African kings and queens, who have been gracious enough to express their entire gratification. It is awfully hot to-day."

The Hierophant wiped the sweat from his brow, and then continued :

"I am now going to divulge to you the greatest mysteries ; such as I would not reveal for a thousand dollars to any one save to a member of our Society."

After a solemn silence, Captain Bumpkins went on :

"This Image has been magnetised and psychologised by the Mysterious Brotherhood. Being in a state of hypnotism it is always inhabited by one or more of the Brothers, who will give answers to the questions we ask. I am now going to make them talk."

Captain Bumpkins then advanced towards the Image, and said :

"Who is now present in you ? Is it Krashibashi ?"

"Krashibashi," repeated the voice from the interior of the Image.

"You see, ladies and gentlemen, it is Krashibashi himself." Then addressing the Image, he asked :

"May I ask a question ?"

"Ask a question," answered the Image.

"Will the Brother kindly tell me the names of those Black Magicians ?" asked the Hierophant.

"Black Magicians," echoed the Image.

"Yes ; the Black Magicians who desire to ruin our Society," continued the Hierophant. "Tell us their names, so that we may kill and destroy them."

"Kill and destroy them," was the answer.

"You see, ladies and gentlemen ; the Brothers give us full permission to kill and destroy these villains ; but they are not permitted to reveal their names. We will have to go out in our astral bodies to hunt them up."

"May I ask a question?" asked Mr. Green, and the answer came:

"Ask a question."

"I wish to call the attention of the respectable Mysterious Brotherhood," said Mr. Green, "to the fact that having received a superior education at one of the most eminent colleges in Europe, and having studied Latin and Greek, geography and natural history, I consider myself qualified to become a member of the Mysterious Brotherhood. I would therefore ask whether I will be accepted as a real Chela?"

"Will be accepted as a real Chela," sounded the answer.

"Let me congratulate you," said the Hierophant to Mr. Green. "What an honour is that conferred upon you!"

The Hierophant embraced Mr. Green and Mrs. Honeycomb looked upon him with profound admiration; but Mr. Malaban being of a jealous nature, did not like to have such high honours conferred upon a European. Bending over, he whispered to Mr. Ram: "I do not think this is to be taken seriously. Krashibashi said it merely in fun."

"Krashibashi said it merely in fun," repeated the Image.

The Hierophant, however, as well as Mr. Green, were too much enraptured to hear that remark. After their mutual congratulations were over Mrs. Honeycomb stepped forward and asked whether she was permitted to ask a question.

"Ask a question," came the voice from the Image.

"I only wish to know," said Mrs. Honeycomb, "whether my friend, the Countess Carnivalli is well?"

"The Countess Carnivalli is well," was the reply of the Image.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the Hierophant, "I have now initiated you into the greatest mystery of the Society for Distribution of Wisdom, and these secrets are not to be divulged to anybody unless he has been fully tested and tried beyond the possibility of backsliding or becoming a traitor. I hope

that none of you will ever communicate them to any one without my permission. If one of you should ever be indiscreet, let him look out for Captain Bumpkins. I am not given to joking. I have been an officer under King Malabolo. I once hit a man with a double-barrelled shot-gun."

"My friend, the Countess Carnivalli . . ." began Mrs. Honeycomb; but she was interrupted by Malaban, who noticed an occult letter at the feet of the Image. He picked it up and handed it to the Hierophant. It was addressed to Mr. Green and contained the following:

"To Mr. Green, titular probationary Chela.—You have shown a deplorable want of intelligence in insulting our most intimate friend and adviser, Madame Corneille. Under other circumstances such a misbehaviour would put an end to your Chelaship. In offending Madame Corneille you have offended me. For once we will overlook your profound ignorance and stupidity; but we order you to beg her pardon and to put yourself under her guidance. Have implicit faith in Madame Corneille; tell her all your secrets and obey all her directions. Whatever Madame Corneille may order you to do, do it.—Krashibashi."

"A letter from Krashibashi!" exclaimed the Hierophant. "Oh, how blessed you are, my brother," and Captain Bumpkins went once more to embrace Mr. Green, nearly upsetting him.

"My master is Rataborumatchi; I do not know Krashibashi," said Mr. Green.

"Wretch!" shouted the Hierophant. "Krashibashi is the boss of the Mysterious Brotherhood. I would not give one Krashibashi for a dozen Rataborumatchi. What! a stripling without any beard on his face comes here to discredit the words of Krashibashi! Shame upon you? I am ready to whip anybody who says that Krashibashi is not a gentleman,"

Captain Bumpkins had talked himself into quite an excitement, and proceeded to pull off his coat to show that he was in fighting trim; but Mrs. Honeycomb interfered and succeeded in pacifying him.

"Now don't!" she said. "Just keep yourself quiet, Captain Bumpkins, and don't put on airs. There is no use in being angry. There is nobody who has anything against Krashibashi."

Overcome by emotion, the Hierophant stopped, and then as suddenly staggered towards Mrs. Honeycomb and shook hands with her. Then growing sentimental he began to weep and blubbered out: "My dear Mrs. Honeycomb! You are my only friend. You are a true daughter of Krashibashi. Swear that you will never betray me. Swear!"

"Oh, Captain Bumpkins!" sighed Mrs. Honeycomb.

"Shall I make some smoke?" asked Malaban, getting his incense ready.

"No!" said the Hierophant. "The meeting is adjourned *sine die*."

The Chelas then prostrated themselves again before the Talking Image and retired in the same order in which they had entered the Shrine. The Hierophant, walking arm-in-arm with Mrs. Honeycomb, wobbled away, followed by Mr. Green. But Pancho, seeing that he was unobserved, remained behind. A moment after he was alone with the Talking Image in the sacred Shrine of Urur.

For a while he stood motionless, like the Talking Image itself, looking at the latter and lost in his thoughts. "This, then," he said to himself, "is the *summum bonum* of the Society for Distribution of Wisdom, and the essence of its mysteries. The Hierophant, an imbecile, the Chelas, simpletons, the Talking Image an echo! Was I possessed by the spirit of an idiot when I made up my mind to go to Urur in search of self-knowledge, or was it the devil that rendered me gullible enough to believe in the absurd tales of Mr. Puffer, the

Chela! Now I have had my experience and the farce is ended. The scales have fallen from my eyes. The next steamer shall carry me home to my wife; but you, O Talking Image, who are the cause of all this illusion and mischief; you who delude the ignorant and betray the weak, may you be"

Pancho did not finish his sentence, for at that moment a rosy light filled the room and an exquisite odour became perceptible. A halo of golden light of a supermundane character surrounded the head of the Image, sending silvery rays upwards towards the ceiling, and as Pancho lifted his eyes to the ceiling, it faded away and oh, wonder! above the statue of stone there floated another Image, an exact representation or counterpart of the former, but far more beautiful, ethereal, living. . . . The glassy gaze of the statue had gone; and an angelic being whose eyes seemed to penetrate to the very centre of Pancho's soul and to read his innermost thoughts, was looking down on him!

Speechless, he beheld the apparent miracle taking place before his eyes, and he saw that the ethereal form floated down and surrounding the image became at last absorbed by it; and in proportion as the latter absorbed its own ethereal counterpart, the eyes of the statue began to brighten, life seemed to come into its limbs, until at last when the absorption was finished, the Talking Image itself seemed to be transformed into an angelic being, hardly inferior to its celestial counterpart. It then began to speak in a sweet voice, differing entirely from the one heard before. It said:

"Curse not the Image, my friend, which, like all other beings, is but an instrument in the hands of its own creator. The echo gives foolish answers to the questions of the fool, but by him who seeks for wisdom, wisdom will be received. An instrument which is not attuned gives forth discordant sounds, and a harp played upon by an ignorant child will not produce the same melodies as if played by a master musician.

Is paper to be cursed, because falsehoods may be written upon it? Are mirrors to be abolished because they reflect the faces of the vile, as truly as those of the virtuous?"

"Who are you, O beautiful being?" asked Pancho. "Are you the god you seem to be or am I labouring under an illusion?"

"I am the Master of the Image," answered the latter. "To know my name would be useless to you. The Light which shines within my being and which gives me Life is self-existent and true. My form is an illusion like yours, like that of Captain Bumpkins, and like that of every other being on earth. All forms are illusive and impermanent; they are not self-existent but subject to continual change. But all, however imperfect they may be, are instruments through which the truth may become manifest, for in all of them is a spark of light, a product of the ray of the Sun of Divine Wisdom. There are lilies and tulips in the gardens, and daisies upon the fields; and in all of them the light of the sun manifests itself by producing various colours and hues. The forms perish, but the sunlight continues to exist even after all the flowers are gone."

"Where can I find that light?" asked Pancho.

"Where should you expect to find the light that shines in you except within your own true Self?" replied the Image. "Seek it where it exists and not where it cannot be known. Seek it not in the realm of the imagination, but at the fountain of truth; seek it not in the brain but in the heart, the centre of your own world."

"You have desired a man who would work entirely unselfishly for the benefit of humanity," said Pancho. "To such a man you have promised to communicate all your knowledge. I have come to undertake that work without regard to self. When shall I obtain my reward?"

There was a pause, and then the voice from the Image spoke and said: "He who has given up the love of Self seeks for

no reward. Only to him who asks for nothing, everything shall be given."

"Teach me, then," answered Pancho, "how I can give up the love of self."

"Acquire first the knowledge of Self," answered the voice ; "you cannot give up consciously a thing which you do not know, and which is not in your possession."

"Give me then the power to possess myself ; teach me the secrets of Alchemy." . . .

As Pancho uttered this selfish prayer, a clap of thunder shook the temple from the top to its very foundation, and the room grew suddenly dark. Involuntarily he closed his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them again, the rosy light and the fragrance had disappeared and the room looked as usual. The Image looked cold and deathlike. Its stony eyes were directed towards the ceiling, and the questions which Pancho asked elicited no response ; its features had the aspect of perfect indifference.

He was now fully convinced that there exist superior and intelligent powers, invisible to the eyes of mortal man, but nevertheless living and active ; but he was also certain that such powers were something different from what he was led to believe, and that their duties must be of a higher kind than to magnetise their blockhead admirers and to play tricks for the amusement of those who flattered them. It then seemed to Pancho as if within himself was contained the shadow of such a power ; a consciousness of a higher mind, a state into which he who enters loses all sight of terrestrial things and is entirely unaffected by that which concerns the everchanging illusion called the personality of man. Caring nothing for its sorrows and joys, he dwells in a realm where all is Light, peace, tranquillity, glory and enduring happiness, in an interior realm where all speculation and fancy cease and pure knowledge alone exists. Surely this and none other must be the realm wherein dwells the Mysterious Brotherhood. . . .

After this adventure Pancho did not feel inclined to mix with the crowd but wanted to commune with his own thoughts. He walked towards the seashore and arrived at the beach over which the waves rolled in rhythmic succession. There was a sandhill from which a fine view could be had of the sea and the distant city. A number of native fishermen were engaged in stretching nets upon a sandbank at the mouth of the river; for as the waves rolled over the bank, they carried with them their living inhabitants and many an unfortunate victim was caught in the treacherous net. There were some beautiful shells buried here and there in the sand; but there were no Barnacles, such as Pancho had seen on the shores of the Pacific, when he walked there with his beloved Conchita, and promised to her that their love should not separate them even in death.

CHAPTER X.

REVELATIONS.

THE days of the anniversary celebration came to an end ; the blue elephants had entirely lost their shape, the native musicians were dismissed, the Hierophant rested on his laurels and the guests returned one after another to their homes.

Pancho remained at Urur. His adventure with the Talking Image had strongly impressed his mind, and he desired to receive some more revelations. He wanted to know what is that "Self" which one must know before it can be renounced, and which we cannot possess as long as we are ourselves possessed by it ; that *Self*, to which man clings with the grip of despair and which no one wishes to lose. "What," he thought "would become of a man who should give up his Self ; what would be left of him, if his Self is all that is in him ?" Then it was that he felt the foreboding of something like a superior state in which there is all knowledge but no conception of limitation and narrowness ; a condition in which the soul is superior to all that concerns the battle of shadows taking place on the material plane ; but that state seemed to him still far away ; far more distant and unapproachable than the sun, resting tranquilly in its own self-luminous light, while his rays play with the phantoms and shadows which they produce upon the material world. Was the rosy light that was absorbed by the Image an emanation of a superior light, in which

life and consciousness and knowledge exist? Was the ethereal form which he imagined he saw one of the Mysterious Brotherhood, or was it the soul of the Image itself? Pancho remembered to have read in Plutarch that every man has a soul and that it does not commingle with the body in all men alike. That in some bodies it gets absorbed fully, and then the whole frame is corrupted by appetites and passions; while it penetrates into others only partially, the purer part remaining outside.

It was said that only the vulgar think that the whole of their soul is within them; just as they believe the image reflected from a mirror to be in the glass; but the more intelligent know it to be without.

He asked Captain Bumpkins about it, and the Hierophant surmised that it must have been either Krashibashi or Rataraborumatchi, adding that he would investigate the matter.

"Do not trouble yourself about such questions," he said. "Wait until my new Wisdom-Catechism is published and you will then know all about it."

"A Wisdom-Catechism?" asked Pancho, astonished.

"Yes," answered Captain Bumpkins, "a catechism about Divine Wisdom; giving the correct explanations of all the mysteries of the universe; a catechism that will make those who read it divinely wise."

"But," said Pancho, "how will those who read know whether or not its contents are true?"

"There can be no doubt about its veracity," said the Hierophant; "because Krashibashi has promised to attest it with his own seal."

Indeed it seemed as if a new era of light was dawning upon the world. A great deal of information on subjects heretofore considered occult was given to the world by some intelligence that spoke through the Talking Image of Urur. Whether the information thus given came from Krashibashi or from Rataraborumatchi is not positively known; but it is certain that the new doctrines astonished the world and gratified the

curiosity of many ; but whether those who were thus better informed, grew any wiser from it, our historian has not been able to ascertain. The new and nevertheless very old doctrines embraced the process of the evolution of the visible and invisible realms of nature, explaining not merely the origin of all gross material and visible forms, but also the cause of the existence and the manner of development of all beings in the universe, from that semi-spiritual monad "or centre of vibration," called "atom," up to a planetary spirit whose body is as large as the sphere of the planet to which it belongs. It proved logically to the mind many things that are open to the perception of the illuminated Seer alone, showing that all forms in the universe are the products of the Universal Will acting upon the ideation of the Universal Mind ; while both these were merely functions of one eternal and self-existing principle, having its origin in the Absolute.

Captain Bumpkins corroborated these statements, and amplified them from the storehouse of his own experience. "It's all done by magnetism," he said. "I have seen a fakir make a mango tree grow out of a kernel merely by magnetising it. The more he magnetised it the more it grew until it was thirty-six feet and two inches high."

"Ah !" exclaimed Mr. Green.

"I told you so," said Mrs. Honeycomb.

The revelations brought out by the Image showed, in a manner comprehensible even to the rationalistic mind, that there could be no such thing as "dead matter" in the universe ; but that the whole world was a manifestation of Life, and that this Life principle was one and indivisible, while it was merely the forms of its manifestations which differed from each other according to the nature of the bodies in which they took place.

"Life," said the voice that spoke through the Image, "is not a product of the form in which it is observed, no more than the air which a person inhales is the product of his lungs ; but it is a manifestation of an invisible and universal power of

Life, which produces all forms and without which no form could come into existence or continue to exist.

"Life," added the Hierophant, "is produced by magnetism. I have seen with my own eyes a fakir buried for forty days, twenty feet under the ground in a hole. I have carefully examined it. There was not even as much as a gas-pipe through which he could have breathed. Any one who saw it done would have betted ten dollars that the man was stone-dead. But when he was taken up, he recovered and ate a hearty breakfast. It is all done by magnetism."

"I have heard of a similar case that happened at Edwardsville," said Mr. Green. "A woman died at that town and two respectable doctors gave their certificates that she was quite dead ; but when they carried her to the churchyard, the coffin struck against the overhanging branch of a tree, and dropped to the ground ; the woman then awoke and was alive as ever. It nearly frightened her husband to death."

"Such a coming back to life," said Captain Bumpkins, "can only occur with persons in possession of abnormal powers and a strong magnetic constitution."

"The husband of that woman," went on Mr. Green, "was so much convinced of his wife's abnormal powers of coming to life again, that when, a year afterwards, she again died, he made the funeral procession go by another road, to avoid the repetition of such an accident."

"I have read the story of an ancient philosopher, who was in the habit of magnetising himself and going out in his astral form," remarked the Hierophant, "on such occasions his physical body being as dead as a door-nail. One day his wife had his body burned to ashes. You should have seen the surprise of the philosopher when he returned and found that his body was gone. It annoyed him very much."

By a series of arguments, at once logical and comprehensive, the Image proved that the divine spirit of Man is not a product of the animal form or organisation ; but that it has existed in

all eternity and will never cease to be ; that forms *are not*, but that they merely *exist*, and that the spirit must overshadow and exist in a form to obtain the perfect consciousness and knowledge that belongs to such forms. It also showed that divine self-knowledge could not possibly be obtained within one short span of life ; but that an almost endless chain of re-incarnations or *re-expressions* in form would be necessary before it could gain all the experience necessary to attain the knowledge of good and evil and gradually grow into that higher consciousness which forms the basis of true self-knowledge. It said that those whose whole attention was absorbed by the external illusions produced by the senses, or by intellectual research into things that belonged merely to the phenomenal aspect of nature, could not attain that knowledge of the spirit which constitutes the knowledge of self ; but that to realise the eternal Reality it was necessary to fix one's thoughts and aspirations upon that which is eternal and real.

"This is perfectly true," said the Hierophant. "I once knew a *yogi* who spent several hours every day in magnetising himself and looking at a fly-speck upon the wall. In seven years' time he became so much developed that he could not tell the difference between a man and a spirit. He used to run against people in the street, supposing them to be spirits, and talked with real spirits, imagining them to be living people. He was ultimately locked up in an insane asylum."

"I wish he were here," remarked Mrs. Honeycomb, "to help us catch these Black Magicians."

"The yoga-philosophy," said the Image, "teaches the suppression of the functions of the thinking principle ; that means to say the suppression of that manner of thinking which is not in exact harmony with the perception of the truth by spiritual contemplation. There is nothing to hinder the mind from penetrating into the deepest mysteries of nature except the perception of the productions of its own imagination, which, like the vapours forming clouds within the terrestrial atmo-

sphere that hinder a person from seeing the sun, fill the mental sphere with illusions and prevent the light of truth from entering the soul. The perverted will of man creates perverted desires, and these call into existence the illusive images of things which have no real existence, causing him to see the truth, not as it is, but merely as a distorted reflection."

"Never think," explained the Hierophant. "The worst thing a Chela can do is to think. Think of nothing! The less a man thinks, the more he knows."

"That is very easy," acquiesced Mr. Green. "I must have been a yogi all my life, I see."

"The internal perception and understanding of truth," continued the Image, "constitutes true meditation, by which the union of the soul of man with his own real divine Self may be accomplished. The practice of *yoga* has for its object to obtain control over one's thoughts and emotions, and to penetrate by the power of interior thought deep down into the sanctuary of the temple, where, upon the innermost altar, slumbers the divine spark which each human being has received from the power that called him into existence. Not the intellectual speculation of man, only the divine spirit within the soul can penetrate into those depths and reveal to man the mysteries of divine being. Who can know these divine secrets but he who has himself experienced the divine state? Who can form an intellectual conception of that which is inconceivable to the imagination? If any one desires to know the truth, let him rise above that which is earthly. Let him fix his whole consciousness in the mirror of that which is eternal; let him fix his soul in the sublimity of the divine Ideal; let him fix his will in the supreme Power within, and by the exercise of divine Love transform his entire being into the image of his divine Self. He will then be able to see and to hear and to feel that which can only be perceived by those who, in this world of errors, can rise above its illusions and live in that heaven of truth."

"Can you give us the astronomical direction in which the heaven is located?" asked Captain Bumpkins. "Please state the exact number of miles in regard to its distance from Urur, and how long it takes an average spirit to reach it."

"Alas!" replied the Image, "you are too far from the truth even to conceive of the distance."

"Is it Krashibashi who is now talking?" inquired the Hierophant.

No response followed.

"I think he is gone," said the Hierophant.

"He must be an awful nice gentleman," said Mrs. Honeycomb. "I could listen to him for hours, if one could only understand what he means."

"The trouble is that one is not always sure who of them is talking," continued the Hierophant. "Sometimes it is Krashibashi, at other times it is Rataraborumatchi, and then again it may only be one of the inferior Chelas. I have therefore made some arrangements with Krashibashi, so that there will be no mistake. I make him give me a sign with the thumb of the Image, so that I should always know whether it is he."

"Did he give you the sign?" asked Mr. Green.

"Not this time," replied the Hierophant, "and I have my doubts as to whether it really was Krashibashi, because he spoke such incomprehensible gibberish. Who ever saw a divine spirit? What does he mean by that spirit revealing to man all sorts of things? I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, what we want is facts and not speculations. I am a scientist. If any one wants to make me believe that he is an Adept, let him levitate himself; let him write an occult letter, or make himself invisible. We do not want to be preached at. We want something tangible."

"But then," said Mrs. Honeycomb, "he spoke so nicely about love and how it transforms one's whole being. I had some experience of that. When I was married I was an entirely different person."

Mr. Green heaved a sigh.

Such and similar conversations took place frequently at Urur, and while Pancho was astonished at the profundity of the thoughts uttered by the Image, he was equally surprised at the way in which they were received by the Hierophant and his followers. The most exalted ideas were rendered ridiculous by being misinterpreted and misapplied. The Talking Image spoke of things of which the members of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom could form no conception. Moreover they had never agreed about a definition of terms, and applied the same words to things which were very different from each other. Thus the story of the building of the Tower of Babel was repeated again, and will always be repeated as long as men do not possess a true conception of the things they are talking about ; for whenever they seek to build a system of thought concerned with those transcendental regions where the material perception ceases and the true ideal begins, their conceptions differ and a "confusion of tongues" takes place.

If the doctrines of the Talking Image were misunderstood even by its own immediate followers, it is not surprising that when they reached the general public they were still more misrepresented and their meaning distorted. Especially its utterances against the abuses of so-called religion, and against the wiles of priestcraft, were looked upon by many as attacks upon the spirit of religion ; its denial of the existence of a mutable and extra-cosmic God was misconstrued into a denial of Deity, that universal divine Power, pure and self-existent, which causes the attractions by which all forms are created.

There were many who saw in the Image nothing but a destroyer of their own cherished opinions, and they were not slow in denouncing doctrines which they were incapable of comprehending.

Truth is welcome to every one so long as it does not come into conflict with one's adopted opinions or with one's own

personal interests ; but when it appears in the shape of an enemy seeking to destroy beloved hobbies and prejudices, which are parts of our very selves, grown into our flesh, it becomes hateful and is driven away. Thus the truths pronounced by the Image were now persecuted by the intellectual but unspiritual scribes and pharisees, distorted and crucified, as in times of old, and the Image itself was denounced by the clergy as being the instrument of the devil.

The jealousy of the African scientists became awakened, for their knowledge was to a great extent a mere belief on accepted authority. How could an Image dare to know things about which respectable bookmakers and University professors knew nothing? Such effrontery could not be tolerated. The point of view from which these scientific critics looked upon transcendental matters was far lower than that of the unknown intelligence that spoke through the Image. They were used to stick to externalities and small details. They were not able to conceive of the Unity of the All and to follow the Image into the higher regions of abstract ideas, where form ceases to exist. Hence they soon joined the clergy in their vilifications and persecutions of the Talking Image of Urur, and spoke and wrote a great deal against it.

While the enemies of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom thus did their very best to make its name known all over the world, those who belonged to it spent all the power at their command to ruin still more effectually its reputation. There were many who, like Pancho, Mr. Green, and Mrs. Honeycomb, had not the faintest conception of what self-knowledge means, and who, nevertheless, imagined it to be their duty to enlighten the world about things which were entirely unknown to themselves. They mistook "wisdom" for a belief in certain statements supposed to come from the Mysterious Brotherhood ; and the rubbish published by them was often sufficiently intolerable to frighten away for ever any honest investigator. In fact the S.D.W. assumed an entirely

sectarian character, and differed from other sects only in so far as it advocated more superstitions than the rest.

Mr. Green became the obedient servant of Madame Corneille according to directions received from Krashibashi. Meeting her in the garden, he apologised to her for his rudeness, and begged her to become his *guru* and guide.

"I will consider the matter," said Madame Corneille; "but you will have to submit to some tests to try your obedience."

"I shall do all you command me to," urged Mr. Green, "because I want to become a real and accepted Chela as soon as I can."

"Very well," she said; "bring me a stick."

Mr. Green went, and soon returned from the woodshed with a stick of dry wood, and handed it to the housekeeper.

"And now I shall throw this stick as far as I can," said Madame Corneille, "and you will pick and bring it back to me."

"But, Madame Corneille! . . ." groaned Mr. Green.

"Just as you please," she interrupted. "If you do not obey, you can leave it alone. The consequences will fall upon yourself."

"Oh, but I will! I will! . . . Certainly," stuttered Mr. Green.

On flew the stick. "Now, *apporte!*" she ordered in French.

Mr. Green proceeded to move gravely in the direction of the stick.

"Hurry on!" she commanded.

He quickened his steps as much as his dignity would permit him, but Madame Corneille was not satisfied. She ordered him to run, and Mr. Green had to run, and to bring the stick back to her. She then threw it in another direction, and made him run for it again, and she repeated her "test" several times, to the great amusement of the servants who were watching the spectacle.

"Now, Mr. Green," said Madame Corneille, after he had become fully exhausted and was panting for breath, "you will have to report to me every day the exact state of your feelings. You know that Krashibashi can read all your thoughts. If you should keep any of them secret from me, he would become extremely displeased. Take good care not to forget anything in your confessions."

Mr. Green promised to obey, and henceforward he confessed his thoughts every evening to Madame Corneille. He told her about a sweetheart whom he had left behind in the old country, and whose name was Minnie. He had promised to marry her; but that was before he had known anything about the Mysterious Brotherhood. When he saw opening before him the bright prospect of being selected for Chelaship, with all the rights and privileges attached to such a position, he had abandoned his Minnie. He now confessed that he was still thinking of her a great deal, and would be pleased to have her as a co-partner in Chelaship; but he had been told that this could not be done.

As Mr. Green advanced in his Chelaship, he became conscious of being beset by temptations of various kinds. Some of these were as terrible as the trials through which the Hierophant himself had passed unscathed. For instance, there were a number of mango trees in the park of Urur, and as the fruits began to ripen, a negro woman of advanced age was set to watch over them lest they should be pilfered by the boys. The natural charms of that negro woman attracted Mr. Green's attention. Ignorant of the reason why she walked daily up and down in the vicinity of the small house in which he resided, and which was situated in the garden, he persuaded himself that she had been sent by the Mysterious Brotherhood as a *temptation* to test his moral character. But Mr. Green was not so easily caught in the snares as that. He could see through it all; nor did he wish to evade the temptation. So taking his chair out on the porch, he sat on it for long hours,

watching the woman, and setting his teeth—he resisted the temptation to the end.

Pancho's temptations were of a different kind. He thought a great deal of Conchita, and it seemed as if some invisible powers were continually trying to drag him back to his home. Still, he did not wish to return. For what little he had heard from the Talking Image seemed to him of far greater importance than everything else in life. Sometimes he feared he was not doing his duty in remaining so far away from his wife, and that the latter might be in need of him. He was therefore very glad when, about a month after his arrival, he received a letter from Conchita in answer to the one he had written to her from Hong Kong, and found it full of affectionate words. Among other things it contained the following passage:

“Do you know, my beloved one, how delicious it is to give one's self up entirely and without reserve to the being we love; to be absolutely in his power, to belong to him fully, body and soul? Surely such a love, to which one gives up one's whole being to be absorbed by him whom we love, cannot be sinful or selfish. Such is my love. My body is here, but my soul is with you. There are a thousand invisible threads which seem to drag it out of me, so that it may fly away and be united with your soul. Our spiritual *séances* have been discontinued, but in the place of it I am making psychic experiments. Juana has brought a man who is said to be a good mesmeriser, and who can put people into a trance so that they become clairvoyant. By his aid I hope to loosen the links which hold my soul to this helpless body, so that it may follow you across the sea and become cognisant of your presence.

“As to your returning, I will only say: Do not return before you have completed your investigations. When you return I want you to belong to me as fully as I belong to you. I am longing to see you, and waiting to welcome you back to

my heart ; but I have no other will than yours. Stay as long as you consider it necessary, and whatever you may decide will always have my entire consent."

Pancho did not exactly like the idea of Conchita having a man to magnetise her, but on further reflection he thought that, if it amused her, it might, perhaps, help to divert her mind. He felt a great relief at having received Conchita's consent to his staying as long as he wished, and in return, he was as perfectly willing to give her his permission to continue her psychic experiments if she could derive any satisfaction from them.

"How strange it is," he thought, "that we cannot love two objects at one and the same time with the same intensity and power ! If we love one, the other is sure to be neglected. If I love Krashibashi with all my heart, I must be indifferent to Conchita. If I love Conchita, Krashibashi will not be attracted to me as he is, and will not give me his secrets. What shall I do !"

"Simpleton !" murmured an interior voice. "Will you never be satisfied that Krashibashi exists nowhere outside of your own imagination, and that your love is merely imaginary ?"

"Let his name be what it may," argued Pancho, "I know that there is some power, and a high intelligence external to myself. I have seen the rosy light absorbed in the head of the Image. Why could not the same rosy light enter my head ? Why could not the Master communicate with me ? There is some mystery in this, and it will be of no use for me to return to my wife before I have found it out."

By special permission of Madame Corneille, who was the chief and supreme keeper of the Shrine, hoping to clear his doubts still further, he obtained another interview with the Image. This was an extraordinary favour, for the Image was not accessible to all persons at all times, but only to Madame Corneille and to Messrs. Malaban and Ram, who were real and accepted probationary Chelas, while the rest were only titular

ones (save Mr. Green, who was now a real titular and probationary one). Nor was it customary to permit any one to see the Image alone, without being accompanied by one of the Chelas, to carry out the prescribed fumigations to keep evil spirits away.

On this occasion, however, Pancho received little satisfaction from the Image, which seemed to give forth merely a reflection of his own thoughts. It repeated in substance the same sentences that were contained in the letter which Pancho had received through Mr. Puffer, and in which it was said that "He who desires to devote his services to the Mysterious Brotherhood must do so with his whole heart, his whole mind, implicitly and without any reserve," &c.

"Why is it that the occultist is not permitted to have a wife?" asked Pancho. "Did not King Solomon have 700 wives and 300 concubines, and was he not the wisest of men?"

"It is not so much the external associations of the body as the associations of the mind, which hinder the seeker after truth to find his own divine self," replied the Image. "Let him who desires to unite himself with truth beware of forming adulterous connections with false opinions and unholy feelings. He who embraces the views of another person and imagines that he has thereby come into possession of self-knowledge is deluded. Matter is not superior to mind, nor Form to Principle. External conditions alone cannot prevent the mind from rising above Matter, if it really desires to rise above it, or to obtain the knowledge of truth."

"Where can we find truth?" asked Pancho.

"He who knows the *One*," replied the Image, "knows All. He who knows the many, knows nothing."

"But who is the *One*?" asked Pancho. "And where will I find it?"

"The *One* is everywhere, and the fruit upon the tree of Knowledge does not ripen by its own efforts. Everything will be accomplished in the fulness of its own time."

"But if I can accomplish nothing by my own efforts," said Pancho, "what is the use of trying to work at all?"

"No one can give to himself that which he does not possess," replied the Image. "He can do nothing more than throw away that which is an impediment to his unfoldment. All light comes from the interior sun."

"But when will that light appear?" still went on Pancho, and the answer came:

"Blessed are those who can live in time as if they were in eternity, and in eternity as if they were in time."

"What does this mean?" he asked.

No answer followed, and no further response could be elicited from the Image.

Pancho desired very much to know who the ONE was, whom one should know to know everything. He asked the Hierophant about it.

"Can't you see," answered Captain Bumpkins, "that it is Krashibashi? If you once get acquainted with Krashibashi, he will tell you everything."

CHAPTER XI.

INTRIGUES.

WHILE Pancho is staying in Africa seeking for Light, it is our duty to see what Conchita is doing.

For a couple of weeks after Pancho's departure, a deep melancholy took possession of her mind. Even her spiritualistic *séances* ceased to interest her, for, however wise were the sayings of "Purity," they consisted in generalities regarding morals and religion which contained nothing new to Conchita; they did not give her any satisfactory information as to what her husband was doing and when he would return.

If she could have risen up to the clouds, and followed with clairvoyant vision the ship that carried her truant lover away, she would have been happy. She would have given worlds to have her inner sight opened even for one short moment of time, and to see Pancho's thoughts. She knew that such things could be done, there was abundant proof in the history of spiritualism, and in the annals of the Society for the Discovery of Unknown Sciences, to show that persons at the moment of death had appeared to their friends in distant countries. Why could she not do the same? Why could not she die for a moment and go to see Pancho and then live again?

The idea of becoming a clairvoyant took entire possession of Conchita's mind, and began to envelop her reason. Juana had already told her of a man who had extraordinary powers

of developing mediumship and clairvoyance in others and she made up her mind to ask Juana to introduce him to her.

"Mr. Smith," answered Juana, "will be ready at any time to attend to your orders."

Mr. "Smith", who in reality was nobody else but Mr. Hagard, came, and at his first visit Conchita felt an indescribable repugnance to him. Something—was it her own clairvoyance, or intuition?—seemed to tell her that this person was dangerous. Nevertheless her curiosity overcame her repugnance; she concluded to try the experiment and "Purity" predicted that it would be successful.

Mr. Hagard was not entirely without psychological powers. He knew how to influence weaker minds by the power of his superior will, or to use a modern phrase, to "hypnotise" them without their knowledge and he often made use of this power in making bargains. Once, merely for the purpose of testing his power, he had willed three of his friends, young men of good character to go to a certain place and get drunk; he watched them as they left, one after another, and before midnight, he had the pleasure of seeing that they were so beastly drunk that they had to be carried off by the police, and moreover two of these three young persons, who heretofore had not been addicted to the use of spirituous liquors, now took to drinking without any further hypnotisation and were now drunken sots, unfit for business of any kind.

Conchita submitted to be "magnetised" by "Mr. Smith." Every evening Mr. Hagard would come, and putting his hands upon Conchita's head, who at first shrank back at his touch, he would pour streams of vile and gross material thought, impregnated with evil will, into her mind. In this work he was assisted by the wily Juana who acted upon Conchita's imagination by giving real or pretended "spirit-communications" and "Purity" gave her blessing to the work of destruction. Gradually thoughts and feelings which had heretofore been unknown to her began to grow within Conchita's

mind, to fill her soul with desires whose nature astonished her and to load her imagination with pictures of a repugnant character. Whether or not any other means were taken to poison Conchita's will and imagination, we are unable to say; it is only stated that, incredible as it may appear, the image of Pancho became gradually less prominent in her mind, and was displaced by an inexplicable affection for Mr. Hagar. At first Conchita was astonished at this change and laughed at its absurdity; but the link was now formed and grew stronger every day until it was too strong to be broken.

Some poet says that vice, seen too often and becoming familiar, is first endured, and at last embraced, and one of the greatest modern occultists says that any inordinate desire or thought having once taken root within the mind may become developed and take form, gaining power over all other desires, thoughts and actions, clouding and enveloping the understanding and at last destroying the supremacy of divine Reason.

Conchita perceived that she was losing her own self, and that another "spirit" was taking possession of her, but it was now too late to reject the intruder. Her thoughts and her manners became changed; she began to feel pleasure in things which she had formerly abhorred, she laughed at Mr. Hagar's jokes and wept afterwards because she had been so foolish as to find them amusing. She accepted Mr. Hagar's invitation to visit places of public amusement with him, and, to make a long story short, she became strongly attracted to Mr. Hagar. while somehow she hated him from the bottom of her heart.

Once, in the beginning of this strange infatuation and some six weeks after Pancho's departure, she received a letter from her husband, which he had written from Hong Kong and she answered it as we have seen in an affectionate manner; but after this, Juana took good care that no more letters from Africa were received by Conchita, while the communications received from the "spirits" went to corroborate her suspicion

that Pancho had found another charmer in Africa. In Conchita's mind, the image of Pancho faded away in spite of her efforts to hold it and Mr. Hagard's will took possession of her heart.

At last she was attacked by a severe spell of sickness for which the doctors could find no appropriate name in their books on Pathology ; but which they classified as "Hysteria." For a long time she seemed to be at the point of dying, and when at last her physical health returned, she was very much changed. But we will not run ahead of the regular course of events.

While this drama was being enacted in San Francisco and Conchita's ruin accomplished, intrigues of a different kind took place at Urur.

The Hierophant had made great friends with Mrs. Honeycomb, and Madame Corneille's authority was on the wane. She was an intelligent woman and of keen perceptions, and could easily foresee that the time was coming when Mrs. Honeycomb would oust her from her position as high priestess of the Shrine. She was cordially hated and feared by all the Chelas except Mr. Green, who in obedience to the orders received from Krashibashi was now the accepted disciple of Madame Corneille, confessing to her all his little secrets and sins and obeying her orders in all things. Thereby he expected to obtain the favour of the Mysterious Brotherhood and to have the time of his probation shortened.

Of the existence of Krashibashi he had no doubt. Not that he had any other proofs of his existence except the letter found at the foot of the Image, but was this not enough? Moreover, his existence was believed in by many respectable persons, and to doubt it would have been undeniably a grave offence, which Krashibashi would have resented. Therefore, Mr. Green did not dare to disbelieve in him. Most of the time he sat in his room, thinking of this Adept, and gradually the latter took form in his imagination. A dark-looking face

appeared to him in his dreams, and was preparing to speak. Knocks and raps were heard in Mr. Green's bedstead, at which he was at first very much frightened. But one night he took courage, and asked, as loud raps were heard :

"Who is there?"

Then a faint voice, as if coming from a great distance, spoke and said :

"It is—me—Bro—brother,—Kra—shi—ba—shi."

It nearly frightened Mr. Green to death, and he hid himself under the bedclothes. But in the morning his courage returned, and since then he became convinced that he was rapidly progressing towards adeptship.

But to return to Madame Corneille, we may also see what she is doing.

Let the reader take some of the magic salve which we herewith present to him and anoint his eyes. He will then see what is taking place in the room of Monsieur and Madame Corneille and listen to their conversation.

Monsieur Corneille is sitting on a sofa, smoking his pipe, while Madame stands near the window, watching the clouds.

"*Fermez la porte, ma chère !*" said Monsieur, "and tell me a leetal vat you know."

Madame Corneille went out upon the verandah, and examined carefully to see whether anybody was listening. Having satisfied herself that no one was near, she returned and locked the door.

"This Mr. Green," she said, moving a chair to the sofa, and seating herself by the side of her consort, "has told me that Bumpkins promised Mrs. Honeycomb to give the Image into her charge. I tell you, our position here is no longer secure."

"*Mais*," replied Monsieur Corneille, "you can write a letter and send away Monsieur Bumpkin."

"True," answered Madame Corneille ; "but that would only

delay the crisis, for he will return again. I am seriously thinking of accepting the proposal of the Rev. Mr. Sniff, who offered to pay me a good round sum if we will only deliver the Image to him."

"'Ow much will Monsieur Sniff pay?"

"Mr. Sniff," said Madame Corneille, "has no money; but he acts in the name of the bishop, and what Mr. Sniff promises is just as good as if the bishop had promised it himself."

"*Nezare!*" exclaimed Monsieur Corneille; "I do not believe in ze promises of Monsieur le bishop, nor in ze promises of Monsieur Sniff. I prefer to 'ave ze money in my pocket."

"I will go and see him," said Madame Corneille, "I think he will pay well if we destroy the Image."

"*Eh bien!*" answered Monsieur Corneille; "you may try a leetal."

Madame Corneille prepared herself to drive to the city, and M. Corneille went to see the coachman to order the carriage.

Mrs. Honeycomb's time was very much taken up with preparations to fight the Black Magicians. She had placed vessels with oil of vitriol not only in her own chamber, but in nearly all the rooms of the house. She had attempted to see the Black Magicians in the magic crystal which Captain Bumpkins still had in his possession, but she had seen nothing. She therefore made up her mind to buy a large looking-glass and to prepare it herself according to certain rules and incantations prescribed in an old book dealing with sorcery. She was walking across the compound, when she saw Madame Corneille coming out of her rooms fully dressed.

"Are you going to drive to the city, dear?" asked Mrs. Honeycomb.

"Yes, dear," replied Madame Corneille. "I am going to make some purchases. Can I do anything for you?"

"I think I will go with you," said Mrs. Honeycomb. "I

have not yet had a good look at the city, and I want to select a good mirror."

Madame Corneille did not care for company on her errand, and so she said that it was quite impossible for her to take any one. "The day is hot and it will be too hard for the poor old horse to carry a third person besides myself and the driver," she added.

"I will wait then until to-morrow," answered Mrs. Honeycomb. "To-morrow I will go out shopping, and you can remain at home."

"I am very much obliged to you," said Madame Corneille, "but it is my business to attend to the shopping, and I would never dare to trust my horse to a stranger."

"I thought," replied Mrs. Honeycomb, "that the horse belonged to Captain Bumpkins, and that I had as much right to it as yourself?"

"It has been put into my charge," snapped Madame Corneille, "and I shall see that my animals are not ill-treated."

"Do you mean to insinuate," asked, indignantly, Mrs. Honeycomb, "that I am in the habit of ill-treating animals?"

"You are a stranger to me," replied Madame Corneille, "and I know from yourself the way you treated your husband."

"I must confess," cried the other, "that I am not accustomed to such language. It seems that in Africa one can learn all sorts of things. When I was at Saratoga, my friend the Countess Carnivalli. . ."

"Do not trouble yourself to give me lessons in etiquette; they are not appreciated."

"Nevertheless it seems that you need them very much," retorted Mrs. Honeycomb.

"All I have to say," replied Madame Corneille, "is, that if the looking-glasses at Urur are not large enough to show off your beautiful figure, you will have to go to the city to buy another mirror at your own expense."

"People living in glass-houses should not throw stones," hissed Mrs. Honeycomb. "I heard Captain Bumpkins say that you had goggle eyes and a crooked nose."

"My face is good enough for my husband," answered Madame Corneille; "but I doubt whether you will ever catch a man again, in spite of all the arts you may practise before your looking-glass."

"Perhaps I had a more intelligent husband than you seem to have," was the snub.

"And perhaps many more than I had," sarcastically grinned Madame Corneille.

Pale with rage Mrs. Honeycomb turned and walked away, and Madame Corneille entering the carriage ordered the coachman to drive to the city. We will follow her there.

We see her alight in front of a shop where she makes some purchases. She then motions the coachman to wait for her return and walks on foot through several streets and narrow lanes until she arrives at a stone wall inclosing a garden. There she stops at a door over which is a cross hewn in the stone. She rings the bell, and presently a Hottentot opens the door. He seems to know her, for he nods as if in answer to a question. Madame Corneille enters the house and walks directly to the Rev. Sniff's room.

Rev. Sniff is a serious-looking gentleman in clerical clothes. His narrow forehead is crowned with thin blonde hair. A large mouth with thin lips, the upper of which is very protruding, seems to divide his smooth-shaven face into two halves from ear to ear, while his sharply-pointed nose and his projecting chin seemed to be attracted towards each other, giving him the appearance of a nut-cracker. Nor is this comparison entirely out of place; for Mr. Sniff had cracked many a hard nut in the interest of his church, and by his eloquence and the unctuousity of his manners he had caused many an inheritance to slip away from its lawful heirs, for the benefit of his congregation.

When Madame Corneille entered the hall, he was reading a novel, but for some as yet unexplained reason no sooner did he hear a step than he hid the book under a sofa-pillow and took up a ponderous bible. When he saw Madame Corneille he smiled and rubbed his hands.

"Welcome, my daughter," he said. "I am always glad to see a faithful member of our blessed church. May I ask what brings you here this morning?"

"I just dropped in to see how you were doing," she replied.

"Thanks to the Lord," said Rev. Sniff, "my health is very good. But how are things at Urur? Are the devils there still having it their own way? Is there no sign of repentance or change of heart?"

"Some more devils have come," rudely replied Madame Corneille, "and they will soon begin tormenting you unless we put an end to their game."

"You are right, my daughter, and I see that you are in a good Christian mood. When you were here last, you seemed to have some doubts with regard to the propriety of destroying the devil's tool. I rejoice to see that the Lord has at last opened your eyes; and hope that you have not forgotten the sacred teaching of your childhood, when at your holy confirmation you were made to promise allegiance to our blessed church. Let us destroy this framework of falsehood which the father of lies has invented the better to blind the eyes of those whose souls he would lead to eternal perdition."

"We have to make a living, Mr. Sniff," coolly observed Madame Corneille. "If we work for the church, we expect to get paid by the church."

"My dear Madame Corneille," was the soft reply. "He who serves the altar is entitled to get his living from the altar, says the Bible: will you help us to do away with the Image?"

"That," said Madame Corneille, "depends on the conditions

we are offered. If we can agree. . . . How much are you willing to pay?"

"The servants of the Lord are poor," replied the rev. gentleman. "Why should you care for silver and gold which rusts and is destroyed by the moth? What are all the joys of the earth compared with the blessings which you will receive when you appear before the Eternal; when you receive your heavenly reward in Paradise for having been a successful co-labourer in the sacred cause of religion and gained a victory over the devil?"

"You may as well spare your breath, Mr. Sniff," said Madame Corneille. "I am not so easily caught with fine talk. For all the jewels which pave the streets of your heavenly city I could not buy a mess of baked potatoes. It's quite right that Christianity should gain a victory; but how much are you willing to give for it?"

"Oh, Madame Corneille!" exclaimed Rev. Sniff. "I actually believe that the poison which these wicked heretics—whom may the Lord destroy—have poured into your ears, has not yet been eliminated from your system. But let me tell you that an influential friend of the church has put a thousand dollars at my disposal, which I may use as I see proper, to advance the cause of religion."

"A thousand dollars!" contemptuously chuckled Madame Corneille. "Why Captain Bumpkins or Mr. Green would give me twice that amount, if I would only betray the plot to them. Say ten thousand, and then we may begin talking."

"Oh, my sister!" groaned Mr. Sniff. "How would you expect to find ten thousand dollars among those who have forsaken the vanities of this world? The missionary funds are almost exhausted, and there has been no famine this year. If I do all in my power, I may perhaps bring up the subscription to two thousand."

"I shall come some other time, when you are better disposed," said Madame Corneille, turning to go.

"Stay!" cried the Rev. Sniff, "suppose I should collect three thousand, what guarantee can you give that we shall succeed in confounding this work of the devil?"

"I will destroy the Image," she replied.

"This is not enough," said Rev. Sniff. "Above all it is necessary that you should destroy its reputation; show that all that it has done, has been accomplished by tricks, ventriloquism, and sleight of hand."

"All this is easy enough."

"Then you will have to show that all its messages are the work of the devil," he continued.

"How can they be the work of the devil if they are done by ventriloquism?" inquired Madame Corneille. "The two statements are incompatible."

"That does not make any difference," said Sniff. "People do not reason so deeply. The more theories the better. Each one may then select the explanation that suits him best. Those who do not believe in the devil may choose ventriloquism, and those who do not believe in ventriloquism may go to the devil."

"I will attend to all that, but not for three thousand dollars."

"I could not give a cent more; we could not afford it, times are too bad. Doubt and irreligion are on the increase, and the number of infidels are growing at a fearful rate. Scepticism is rampant. It has ceased to be looked upon as a crime, and the authority of the church is openly disregarded. The churches are empty and contributions scarce. If we get a heathen converted, he costs us a great deal more than he is worth. There are numbers of these rascals whom I have baptized a dozen times over, whose faces I know, but who come to me each time under another name so as to get their fee. See the money they cost us. It is only by casting our bread upon the waters that we can expect to get a return."

"I will consult my husband about it," she said.

"Let me know your decision to-morrow. And now, farewell, my daughter; and may the blessing of the Lord be upon you, so that you may succeed in your undertaking."

So saying, the Rev. Mr. Sniff gave his blessing to her, and Madame Corneille went away rejoicing over the money which she expected to get. Mr. Sniff watched her through the window, and as he saw her pass out through the door, a malicious grin crept over his face, and he whispered, "There is many a slip between the cup and the lip." He then snapped his fingers, and took from under the pillow the novel which he had hidden away.

Had Pancho bought the magic mirror, recommended to him by the Hierophant, he would undoubtedly have been able to see that there were some disorganising elements within the folds of the S.D.W. He would have perceived the devils of vanity, conceit, envy and avarice enter within the sacred precincts of the temple, in spite of Mrs. Honeycomb's vessels filled with vitriol; and they had all one common leader—a great Black Master Magician, an expert in creating illusions, whose name was "SELFISHNESS". Even the magnetism which the Chelas had accumulated by letting their hair and nails grow to an enormous size did not prove strong enough to serve them as armour, and protect them against the attacks of these unseen enemies. Messrs. Malaban and Ram disliked all non-Africans, and especially those Europeans who were presumptuous enough to aspire to Chelaship in the Mysterious Brotherhood. This was a right which they believed to belong to Africans alone, as the Brothers themselves were said to be of the African race. Neither Mr. Malaban nor Mr. Ram had ever been outside of Africa, nor did they know the least thing about European civilisation and science. As a benighted inhabitant of China looks upon all foreigners as barbarians, so these African *Chelas* considered all Europeans as inferior beings. Mr. Malaban was a descendant of a noble family of Hottentots, while in the veins of Mr. Ram ran the blood of

the Kaffirs. Both of these gentlemen were co-editors of the *Light from the Shrine*, a journal which expounded the views of the leaders of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom. Mr. Malaban's writings were very much in demand, on account of the self-assurance with which he wrote about things of which he knew absolutely nothing. Mr. Ram wrote little, but talked a great deal. Once the flow of his eloquence had started there was no means of knowing when it would stop.

If we enter the editorial room we find Malaban and Ram holding friendly converse. Both are squatting on the floor, and smoking their pipes. Mr. Malaban had just finished writing an article for the *Light from the Shrine*, and reads it to Mr. Ram. It is as follows :—

“WESTERN SCIENCE AND ITS ABSURDITIES.

“Some Western ‘scientists’ have again dished up the absurd statement that the moon could not be inhabited, because, as they say, there is neither water nor air in it. One of our ‘esteemed correspondents’—of course, a European—is innocent enough to ask us whether we believe in that statement. We will not waste our time in entering upon a lengthy examination of the question how these so-called ‘scientists’ can know that there is neither water nor air in the Moon, as they have never been there themselves. All we wish to say is that it has been stated over and over again and repeated in the pages of the *Light from the Shrine*, that there are beings that can live without water and air; and we are, moreover informed by a higher authority than ourselves, that there is a very ancient book called *Guliver's Travels*, which gives an exact description of the inhabitants of the Moon. The time, however, for such revelations to be given out to the world has not yet arrived; nor are we, ourselves, permitted to give out any detailed accounts in regard to the nature of the lunar inhabitants, as such mysteries are not to be divulged to the vulgar. But we warn our readers that they should pay more

attention to what we write. If they cannot remember what we have already said, let them search the back numbers of our journal, as our time is too precious to be wasted in answering questions which have already been answered, and plainly enough to be understood by any one gifted with common sense. Even if the bright side of the Moon were without water and air, there is no reason why the dark side of it should not have as much of it as is desirable, if not more."

"Hit them right!" exclaimed Mr. Ram. "Unless you talk plain English with these fellows, they will have no respect for you. The style of the article is vigorous. They will think it has been dictated by the Talking Image itself. But do you know anything about the inhabitants of the Moon?"

"Not I," replied Malaban; "but I heard Madame Corneille say to her husband that he looked like the man in the Moon. So of course there must be men in it."

"These stupid Europeans," said Mr. Ram, "seem to think that Krashibashi has nothing to do but to answer their foolish questions! Here is a letter from a woman calling herself the Countess of Carnivalli, with a request to submit it to the Mysterious Brotherhood. Listen:

"MY DEAR SIR.—I cry to you from the depths of despair. I perceive with horror that I am getting older and uglier with every day. I have read your article on the "Elixir of Life," showing how youth and beauty could be restored. I entreat you, for pity's sake, to send me a bottle of that Elixir, with directions how to use it. Send it C. O. D. All charges will be paid. Yours with the greatest reverence,

"THE COUNTESS CARNIVALLI."

"Here is another letter from London," continued Mr. Ram.

"Office of David Solomon Hirsch.

"MR. KRASHIBASHI, ESQ., URUR.—Dear Sir.—*Light from the Shrine* received and contents duly noted. Please forward,

by return mail, price-list of Philosopher's Stones and samples. We hope to dispose of several gross among Members of Parliament, City and Club men. How much is the amount of commission?—Respectfully,

“ ‘D. S. HIRSCH.’ ”

“How can we send him a Philosopher's Stone?” remarked Malaban. “I have never seen one myself.”

“Here is also an application for Chelaship,” continued Mr. Ram.

“‘DEAR SIR.—The undersigned longs to be admitted to Chelaship, and hereby promises the strictest obedience to any and all orders coming from unknown Superiors.—Yours very truly,

“ ‘A. SINGLETON.’ ”

“He is a suitable person,” said Malaban. “He must be accepted.”

“Here is another from Madagascar,” said Mr. Ram.

“‘CAPTAIN BUMPKINS.—Dear Sir,—I have the honour to inform you that I have been appointed by the “Society for the Discovery of Unknown Sciences,” to go to Urur and investigate the claims of the Mysterious Brotherhood. If they prove to be satisfactory, the Brothers may be certain of the warmest support of our Society. I am here on this island for the purpose of obtaining a specimen of the Unicorn, in the interest of science; but I have not yet been successful. There would certainly be no better occasion for the Mysterious Brothers to prove their wonderful powers than by assisting me in securing a Unicorn. If they grant my request, please ask them also to let me have a specimen of the *Phoenix* for our ornithological collection. One that has already been reborn from its ashes preferred.—Yours very sincerely,

“ ‘H. BOTTLER.’ ”

“We will have to submit this letter to the Talking Image,” said Ram.

"There is no need of bothering Krashibashi about it," replied Malaban, "I am his Chela, and if I answer it in his name it is just as good as if Krashibashi had written the answer himself."

"Malaban!" sounded a shrill voice from the top story of the temple. Malaban turned pale, and hurried up stairs to the room where the Image stood. It showed no signs of life, but from its interior sounded a voice, saying:

"Fool! Do not let me hear you say again that a letter written by you is just as good as one written by Krashibashi."

"I did not know," stammered Malaban, "that you were listening. I wanted to save Krashibashi the trouble."

"Begone," commanded the voice, "and do not plagiarize so much. It all falls back on me."

"How about the Unicorn?" asked Malaban.

"Tell the Bottler to come," said the Image. "Avaunt!"

Malaban retired with a reverential bow, but before he had fully descended the stairs, he heard himself called again. Once more he hurried up stairs.

"What are your orders?" he asked the Image.

"Nothing," it replied. "I wanted to say something, but I have changed my mind."

CHAPTER XII.

A MIRACLE.

FAR be it from **us** to throw a slur upon any of our fellow-men, or, still worse, to impugn the intelligence of any legally constituted authority.

Nor do we wish to besmirch the memory of good people by attributing wrong motives to what they did. An old proverb says that to him to whom God gives an office He also gives the qualifications necessary to fill it. But in spite of all this, it is true, and the cloak of charity is not long enough to hide the fact, that, in comparatively modern times, at a certain village to which a negro, by some mishap, found his way, he was rubbed and washed by order of the authorities, for the purpose of making him white, because these good and well-meaning people had never heard of black men. The burgo-master, especially, was not a little indignant that a strange vagabond should dare to appear in his presence with such a black face.

It is in the nature of man that he should fear and hate that which he does not know, and persecute that which he does not understand. Thus it has been before, and history never ceases repeating itself. The huntsman is proud of killing a bird such as has never been seen, and the scientist knows of no greater pleasure than to examine a new discovery in its minutest

details, even if that examination involves the destruction of the object.

Let the new discovery be a bird of the woods or a truth descended from Heaven for the purpose of redeeming the world, it will always have to be ill-treated by ignorance, misunderstood, and its form destroyed before poor and benighted humanity will awaken to a true understanding of its nature. In vain the history of Galileo is shouted into the ears of the modern scientist, he himself constitutes a petty tribunal of inquisition, and acts like the one which objected to the rotundity of the earth, whenever he finds a truth not in accordance with his adopted opinions.

We do not claim that this should not be so ; we believe that everything is the outcome of previously existing conditions, and therefore exactly what it must be. We do not propose to blame the world for not being better than it is ; we would merely like to have it clearly understood what it is. Neither credulity nor scepticism is the true saviour of mankind.

The history of *Christina Mirabilis*, born in 1150, at Luetlich, who had the power of flying from tree to tree like a bird, and who could not be caught until some ruffian succeeded in breaking her leg with a stick of wood thrown at her, or that of *Joseph of Cupertino*, born on July 17th, 1603, at Naples, who was first tortured on the rack by the Holy Inquisition, and afterwards made a saint, because he was in possession of certain powers, of which the majority of other persons do not know that they exist. These and a thousand similar histories might be cited to show that Self-opinionatedness is the spouse of Ignorance, and Cruelty is their child.

Nor does the history of the Talking Image of Urur show that those who wish to pry with curious eyes into the mysteries of Nature have become any wiser than their forefathers, who likewise hunted for external proofs, for the purpose of convincing themselves, by argumentation, of the existence of

things which they ought to have been capable of perceiving within their own selves.

Phenomena of a strange and occult character continued to take place in the presence of the Talking Image. The ringing of invisible silver bells was often heard in the air, and occult letters were dropped on the heads of the Chelas, but the greatest phenomenon of all that occurred, and one which may truly be considered of a miraculous nature, was that some of the benighted Chelas and Members of the Society for Distribution of Wisdom actually said and wrote certain things, whose character bore self-evident proof that they must have emanated from an intelligence superior to their own. Unfortunately, such an inspiration never lasted. Thus, Mrs. Honeycomb wrote a little book entitled *Rays of Wisdom* which contained great and exalted thoughts, and was evidently full of divine inspiration; a book which she herself neither understood, nor did she follow the counsels given therein. It was, nevertheless, a very remarkable book, and one which seemed to be the outcome of the magnetism of Rataraborumatchi poured upon Mrs. Honeycomb's head.

Mr. Green, likewise, after having received several numbers of the *Edwardsville Herald*, sent to him by a friend, and which spoke in a flattering manner of his prospects of being advanced to the hierophantic chair, felt encouraged to sit down and try some of Krashibashi's magnetism, an effort which we are glad to state was not without a certain result. He went into poetry, and, with his permission, we will give the reader a specimen of his productions:—

"Do you know for what I'm yearning?

Guess, ah, guess what it can be!

I am yearning after learning

All 'bout *Mulaprakriti*.

"I am yearning, like the parrots,

Without mustard cannot be,

And like mules that yearn for carrots,

After *Mulaprakriti*."

If we take into consideration the fact that Mr. Green never wrote any poetry before, we shall clearly perceive that he must have been inspired ; for, although the form of the poem is somewhat defective, the underlying ideas are very suggestive and beautiful.

But Pancho's brain, we are sorry to say, remained entirely inactive, even under the combined influence of the magnetism of Krashibashi and Rataraborumatchi, for, being of a mulish and stubborn nature, he would continually do his own thinking, and not allow the ideas of the Mysterious Brotherhood to take shape in his mind.

Madame Corneille's occult powers were of a different kind. Her speciality seemed to be the production of direct occult letters without the application of magnetism of any kind ; and, moreover, the occult letters produced through her strange mediumistic powers offered the extraordinary advantage of always appearing at the time when they best served her purpose.

Thus a few days after the interview between Madame Corneille and Rev. Sniff, Captain Bumpkins found an occult letter while alone in his room. Its contents were as follows :—

“ MY DEAR BUMPKINS.—In consideration of the valuable services which you have rendered to the cause of Truth, and as a reward for your indefatigable labours, I am authorized by the great *I Am* to communicate to you the following :

“ You are aware that the chiefs of the Mysterious Brotherhood live in a city called Kakodumbala, situated within the inaccessible mountain regions of the Lybian desert, and guarded by a legion of grim elementals. No mortal foot has ever found the way to the place where we live, nor could it be approached by a balloon, as we would immediately send a thunderbolt to annihilate the intruder ; but to you, our esteemed Hierophant, we will disclose the fact that there are subterranean passages leading under the mountains to the

doors of our city. He who is wise enough to discover such a passage, courageous enough to enter it, and strong enough to encounter the foul air contained therein, if once he safely passes through that passage, to him the doors of our city will be opened, and the remaining years of his Chelaship will be remitted. We will give him a diploma to show to the world that he is a member of the Mysterious Brotherhood, and he shall be entitled to wear a green ribbon with the order of the Blue Elephant suspended upon his breast. Hoping that you will make the attempt to find the subterranean passage, so that you may be introduced to the great 'I Am.' I remain, Yours faithfully,

"KRASHIBASHI."

Where, ah, where, can we find words to express and picture the delight which Captain Bumpkins experienced after reading this letter! He made up his mind to immediately start for the mountains, and discover the subterranean hole. He did not for a moment consider the dangers connected with such a perilous undertaking; he only thought of the diploma, of the order of the Blue Elephant, and of his introduction to the great *I Am*, whom he rightly supposed to be a personage superior to the rest of the Mysterious Brotherhood, and whom he pictured to himself as an old, benevolent man, with a long grey beard, dressed in a white gown, with a crown upon his head, and reading the *Bhagavat-Gita*.

Thus the Hierophant left, and for several weeks nothing unusual happened at Urur. Madame Corneille frequently went to the city, presumably to hold interviews with the Rev. Sniff. Mrs. Honeycomb was searching for means to discover the whereabouts of the Black Magicians, Mr. Green occupied himself with evolving thoughts for the benefit of Humanity, and Pancho wasted his time in worrying because he did not know certain things, instead of employing it in seeking to obtain knowledge of them.

At this time some violent attacks were made by certain newspapers upon the Talking Image and its doctrines. These were said to be pernicious, and the occult phenomena taking place at Urur were denounced as sleight-of-hand performances. They were made, it was averred, by Mr. Green and the other Chelas, for the purpose of enticing the gullible into the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom. Especially *The Missionary*, a paper published at the city, was virulent in its attacks upon the Image, saying that it was possessed by devils, and that all it said was produced by ventriloquism: that Krashibashi and Rataraborumatchi were spooks and impostors, and that the Image ought to be destroyed and its supporters prosecuted by law.

To substantiate these claims a number of letters were published by *The Missionary*, and these letters were said to be copies from originals signed by Krashibashi and Rataraborumatchi. The originals were to be privately shown at the office of *The Missionary*, whose editor was the Rev. Sniff. This threw a great deal of discredit upon the Mysterious Brotherhood, impugning as it did the honesty of Krashibashi, the veracity of Rataraborumatchi, and the intelligence of Captain Bumpkins and Mr. Green. The following are some of the specimens, as they appeared:

Extracts from "The Missionary."

"MY DEAR MADAME CORNEILLE,—The Mysterious Brotherhood is sorely in need of money. Please persuade Captain Bumpkins to appoint a committee to go to London and to rob the Bank of England of a few millions of pounds. Let him choose for that purpose only people of intelligence—if any such may be found. Let them be provided with crowbars and dynamite, and take good care not to be caught. Yours for the truth, RATARABORUMATCHI."

The second letter, in different handwriting, was addressed to the Hierophant.

"MY DEAR CAPTAIN BUMPKINS,—You know that every Chela must have a master, whose orders he must obey implicitly, but whom he is not permitted to know until he becomes finally initiated after having had his obedience tested and tried in every way. You will probably soon be offered a high position in the government. Accept it, but whatever the government may order you to do, always remember that you must first of all obey the orders of your unknown Master, which you will receive through Madame Corneille. Not the enemy of the government, but the enemy of your Master is your enemy. Do not forget this, and all will be well with you, even if the government goes to the deuce. Yours faithfully, KRASHIBASHI."

The third letter was in still another handwriting, and the experts that were called in have never been able fully to determine the name of the Mysterious Brother who wrote it. It was as follows :

"SAPRISTI!—Shal we submit to bay our monée to the Gouvernement? Shal we *supprimer* our *raison*? Shall we listen to the enseignments of *Monsieur le* bishop?" No, *nerare*! We will eat up these Hottentots. They will be nothing to us but a *déjeuner à la fourchette*."

The last one was signed by the "Talking Image" itself, although it has never been explained how an image of stone could write a letter without being made to write it by some external influence. It ran thus :

"Oh, how weary I am of life in a world where everything without a single exception is the product of ignorance; a world which is only one grand hallucination. Please show me one man or woman who is not a fool, and I will thank you for it. Alas, he who thinks that he is not a fool is surely the greatest of all, because life itself is a tomfoolery, and if he were not a

fool, he would not have been born at all. What but vanity is even the greatness of the kings in this world ? . . .”

(The rest of the letter—it was stated—could not be published for reasons that are intimately connected with the interests of religion and morality.)

Such villainous and seditious letters, subversive to the authority of church and state, and tending to overthrow the very foundations of society—(for what would become of society if every person should consider the other a fool ?)—could not be tolerated. Even the friends of the Image did not wish to be told that they were fools ; the scientists stormed, the clergy raged, the aristocracy became indignant ; the Government was applied to for protection, and the public demanded in a loud voice that the Image should be destroyed.

To crown the exposure, a letter in the handwriting of Mr. Green was found and published in *The Missionary*. It was addressed to a medical man, and its contents were as follows :—

“DEAR SIR.—I have been informed that you have a good remedy by which the power of ventriloquism can be developed. Ever since I came to Urur, I and the other Chelas have been engaged in making ‘the Image’ talk by our ventriloquism and we are all affected with sore throat and cramps in the digestive organs. If you can give me any advice, please address,

“GREEN, ESQ., CHELA, URUR.”

This letter, which, however, afterwards was declared to be a forgery, settled the matter. It proved beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the Image was not only possessed by devils, but that all its utterances were the results of frauds and impostures produced by Mr. Green, Mr. Malaban and Ram. Henceforth, the clamour of the press, and the outcry of the public, could not be treated any longer with indifference. It was necessary that an example should be made and the culprits be punished.

These were dark days for the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom. While the Hierophant was away, seeking for the subterranean hole that leads to the city of Kakodumbala, they were like a herd of sheep without their leader, not knowing which way to go. In vain Messrs. Malaban, Ram and Green sent lengthy communications to the papers in defence of the Mysterious Brotherhood ; the former expressing his contempt for the vile insinuations of *The Missionary*, which he would not have condescended to answer if it were not for the benefit of Humanity ; while the latter stated that he had studied Latin and Greek, and that, therefore, even a child might see that he was not the man to be easily imposed on. Alas, for poor Humanity ! All these communications were returned with the ominous words written on the margin, "Declined with thanks." In vain Mrs. Honeycomb, being certain that it all was the work of Black Magicians, substituted nitric acid for the oil of vitriol, the latter having proved to be ineffective to restore harmony at Urur. Krashibashi and Rataraborumatchi seemed to have gone to sleep. Whether they had emigrated, or found it beneath their dignity to meddle with such trifling affairs, has not been ascertained ; because Captain Bumpkins was gone and the Chelas were not permitted to tell. At last, however, a communication was given through the "Image," signed by the great I Am, in which he said that on a certain day he would give a public proof of his power, and existence, and perform a miracle.

This letter created a great sensation, and a kind of armistice was silently agreed upon between the friends and the foes of the Image, until the day of the miracle should arrive.

At this time an event occurred which created a great sensation among the members of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom. It has never been ascertained how the rumour originated ; but on a certain day the news was suddenly spread that a living Adept, a member of the Mysterious Brotherhood, had been seen near the Shrine, and was now inhabiting one of

the forests adjoining Urur. The appearance of a man-eating tiger in the vicinity of an African village, would not have created a greater sensation than did this report about the presence of a man who was really wise. The Chelas were seen to run about and gesticulate in an excited manner, and every one who was not an invalid took to the woods in search of the supposed Adept. Mr. Green along with the others swore that he would not return until he had attained his object.

Pancho went likewise to the forest ; but for a different purpose. He had begun to think that it would be of little use to hunt for an Adept from whom to receive further instruction, as long as the instructions which he already possessed were not carried out. Moreover, he was led to believe that spiritual knowledge is of a subjective kind, which cannot be taught by words ; but that it consists in a knowledge of certain powers existing within one's self, and which must exist therein before one is able to know them. He cared no more for talk but wanted to study the germs of power existing within himself, and to practise that meditation which is taught in the ancient books. He got the translation of Edwin Arnold's "Song Celestial," and read the description in it of a Yogi ; that is to say of one who has attained the power of being self-conscious of divine truth.

" Sequestered should he sit
Steadfastly meditating, solitary,
His thoughts controled, his passions laid away,
Quit of belongings. In a fair, still spot,
Having his fixed abode—not too much raised
Nor yet too low—let him abide ; his goods
A cloth, a deerskin and the Kusa grass.
There setting hard his mind upon the One,
Restraining heart and senses, silent, calm,
Let him accomplish Yoga and achieve
Pureness of soul, holding immovable
Body and neck and head, his gaze absorbed
Upon his nose end."

Pancho made up his mind to follow these directions and to try the experiment. He knew of a quiet secluded spot near

the seashore, where he could practise the ceremony prescribed in the *Bhagavat-Gita*, without being disturbed. He resolved to make the trial. True, he thought that a little more clothing than a cloth would do no harm and he had neither a deer skin nor a supply of Kusa grass; but these were evidently matters of secondary consideration.

So taking his hat he proceeded towards the seashore. He did not follow the road but went through the forest and jungle to a place where stood an old deserted Mohammedan temple whose walls were crumbling to pieces. He mounted the platform in front of it. This platform was about four feet high and consequently "not too much raised nor yet too low." There he sat down, making himself as comfortable as possible, watching for a while the moonbeams playing upon the foaming waves and listening to the sound of the surf. He then tried to keep his body, head and neck immovable, and directed his gaze upon his nose end, not without fear however of getting a permanent squint.

Some months had now elapsed and Pancho had received no further news from his wife. To his troubles about philosophical questions was added the anxiety to know the reason of Conchita's silence. He had written several letters but received no answer. He had even begun to make himself familiar with the thought that she was dead. In this opinion he was confirmed by the fact that he dreamed of her frequently and believed at times he saw her form even after awakening; but no sooner did his external consciousness become fully re-established, than the apparition disappeared.

He tried to think of nothing, but did not succeed, for thoughts of Conchita came into his mind; when his eyes were attracted to the moonbeams that fell through the branches. Suddenly it seemed to him as if there was a cloud-like mist floating between the trees, and that it grew denser and denser, until it assumed the well-known form of Conchita, robed in white; but far more beautiful than he had ever seen her in

life. Her face was radiant with joy, her eyes seemed to penetrate to his very soul, she smiled, and although her lips did not move, nevertheless it seemed to him that he heard her voice, saying :

"Do not grieve, my beloved one, all will be well."

"Is it then true," thought Pancho, "that you are dead?" and as if in answer to his thoughts the form replied :

"Not dead ; but gone before."

"How happy you seem to be," cried Pancho, and heard her reply :

"Joy ! joy ! There is no death. My power to communicate with you is growing stronger. Farewell !"

"Farewell !" echoed Pancho, as the dear form faded away.

How long Pancho sat in that place meditating about the vision he had seen is not known ; but he was suddenly disturbed by a voice speaking in solemn accents the words :

"Rum, shrum, Korumbulum, satawaki, Karibaki, Krashibashi."

It was Mr. Green's voice, and as Pancho looked around, there in the moonlight stood Mr. Green himself, repeating the above meaningless words. But what was most peculiar about him was that he was dressed in absolutely nothing except a loin-cloth, his white flesh forming a strong contrast with the dark background of trees.

"Rum, shrum, Korumbulum !" it sounded again, when Pancho exclaimed :

"What are you doing, Mr. Green ? Are you not afraid of snakes ?"

"No snake will bite him who has been selected to become a hierophant," replied Mr. Green. "I have become a real probationary Chela, and I am under the special protection of Krashibashi who will see that I am not bitten by snakes."

"But what has become of your clothes ?" asked Pancho.

"I took them off," replied Mr. Green, "for it is written that a real Yogi must wear nothing but a loin-cloth."

"And what are the words you spoke?" asked Pancho.

"I am sorry that you have listened," answered Mr. Green.

"They are a sacred formula that was given to me by my *guru*."

Pancho looked into the eyes of Mr. Green and what he saw there was—insanity! Then it seemed to him as if he had suddenly become aware of an abyss yawning at his feet, and that he himself was on the verge of it. He knew that if he should go one step further he himself would become a maniac like Mr. Green.

By a good deal of persuasion he prevailed upon Mr. Green to put on his clothes and return home with him. From this simple act of kindness Pancho received more interior satisfaction and spiritual strength, than if he had stood upon one leg for a week, or held his breath for a month, or gone through any similar kind of ceremony prescribed by the Yoga philosophy. In the meantime the day was approaching when Krashibashi was to perform his miracle. On the evening before the great day, numerous visitors had arrived for the purpose of witnessing it. Among the former was Mr. Bottler, in his official capacity as deputy of the Society for the Discovery of Unknown Sciences, and it was on him that now hung the hopes of the S. D. W. He was looked upon as the redeemer who was sure to confound the enemies of the Society, by proving beyond any reasonable doubt the existence of the Mysterious Brotherhood; and what Mr. Bottler said confirmed the members of the S. D. W. in their belief that they would gain a complete victory over their detractors.

"I congratulate the members of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom," said Mr. Bottler, "that a man of such eminent qualifications as I possess has been selected to investigate the claims of the Mysterious Brotherhood. If these Brothers exist, I say, let their doctrines be believed, by all means; but if they do not exist, then their doctrines should not be accepted, for what they teach can only be pernicious in the extreme. If it can be shown that the raps which were

made in the presence of the Image were not produced by the great Krashibashi, but by a being of an inferior order, then I say, I shall not believe for a moment in his theories of evolution; but if Krashibashi himself produced these raps, then I shall announce to the world that his doctrines are true."

These wise words of Mr. Bottler were received with great applause.

"There can be no doubt that there exists a source of inspiration," observed Mr. Green.

"If there is such a source," observed Mr. Bottler, "let it be shown. Let it come forward and show whether or not it can stand the test of scientific research. What is this power which claims to be the source of inspiration? To what category does it belong? What is its chemical composition? How shall it be classified? Let it give us visible and tangible proof of its existence. Until this is done, I for one shall refuse to believe."

Mr. Bottler was then introduced to Madame Corneille, and they soon became friends. She made to him certain revelations intensely interesting and highly important for the promotion of science. What the exact nature of these revelations was has never been fully revealed, from that day to this. It was merely whispered that Mr. Bottler was provided with a large-sized flask to be corked with Solomon's seal, and into which he expected to ensnare a living Adept to be henceforward preserved in the Museum of his Society.

Supper, to which a number of guests were invited, was announced. During that meal Mr. Bottler astonished the members of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom by his profound learning.

Mr. Green proposed a toast to Mr. Bottler, the representative member of the Society for the Discovery of Unknown Sciences, and in answer to it Mr. Bottler rose and said:

"Well may modern science be proud of the results it has achieved! All that has been formerly considered occult, has

now been thoroughly explained, and new discoveries are continually being made by science. Through my own indefatigable labours, carried on with an immense amount of patience and exactness for a number of years, I have succeeded in proving beyond the possibility of contradiction, that if we take one of these rotato-spheroidal Calcium-carbonate exudates of embryonal-gallinaceous intermediary formations" (here Mr. Bottler took up an egg from the table), "and by the exercise of a certain amount of force perforate the polar *curvature-maxima* of the same situated diametrically opposite, disturbing the equilibrium within the exterior periphery, either by suitable mechanical appliances, or even by physiological means, we may create variations between the internal and external tensions of the fluids contained within the said ovoid body. In consequence of this, the protoplasmic sarcode mass with all the physiological products belonging thereunto, will be expelled either with a constant or varying velocity, in a straight or parabolic direction, according to the fundamental laws governing the hydrodynamic equations of fluidic and semi-fluidic bodies."

Larger and larger grew the eyes of Mr. Green during Mr. Bottler's discourse. Formerly he had imagined that to suck an egg it was only necessary to make a hole in each end; but now he saw the profundity of his ignorance. The members of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom listened awestruck and in silence, and their attention reached its climax when Mr. Bottler proceeded to demonstrate by beautiful experiment the truth of the theory he had so clearly explained. He solemnly perforated the ovoid body; but as the egg was hard boiled—a circumstance which Mr. Bottler could not have foreseen—the experiment failed this time.

The eventful day had arrived.

The great day of the MIRACLE. Early in the morning large crowds assembled at Urur; but only a certain number of selected people received admission cards to enter the Shrine. At the appointed hour the procession could be seen wending

its way to the temple. There was Malaban Babu with his unavoidable flag, and Ram Garu carrying incense, Messrs. Bottler, Green, Pancho, Mrs. Honeycomb with other Chelas, besides a great number of experts and dignitaries that had come from the city to witness the performance. They entered the temple and ascended the stairs leading to the sacred room. They opened the door in solemn silence and raised their eyes in reverential awe. They looked in the direction of the Shrine and then stared wildly at each other. . . .

The "Talking Image" *was gone!*

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BOOK OF MYSTERIES.

AN indescribable consternation was caused at Urur by the mysterious disappearance of the Talking Image. Those that had come to enjoy the fun of seeing a miracle declared themselves to have been cheated ; they stormed and raged and denounced the Image as being the work of the devil. The leaders of the Society for Distribution of Wisdom hung their heads in shame and mortification ; because now the existence of sages was beyond the possibility of being demonstrated to science. The Chelas looked wise, but threw out only ambiguous hints ; for as a matter of course they were not permitted to tell that which they were supposed to know.

The room of the Image was in perfect order and nothing was missing in it, only the air therein seemed to be somewhat different from what it had been before ; but this difference was only perceptible to those who were of a sensitive nature, and, for all we know, it may have existed only in their imagination. Every one agreed that the Image was too ponderous to have been carried away without making a noise that would have attracted attention, as it would have required at least six strong men to bring it down the narrow and winding stairs. There was no blood, nor any burnt remnants, nor any other sign that a crime had been committed. There was only one

plausible theory, namely, that it had been thrown out of the window into the river below ; and in that case it would have immediately sunk to the bottom on account of its heavy weight. But even this theory was hardly admissible, because the window was found to be fastened from the inside and the room had been carefully locked by Madame Corneille. Immediate search however was made in the river by native fishermen, experts in diving ; but nothing was found. The Image was gone. This alone was absolutely certain and beyond the possibility of a doubt. Its goneness required no other scientific proof, but the fact that it was absent ; a fact which was self-evident even to the most superficial observer and undeniable even by the most stubborn logician ; but the manner in which it had left and where it went remained a mystery.

All the researches proved vain. A rich Hottentot offered a considerable sum for the recovery of the Image. The scientific experts appointed one committee after another to find out its whereabouts. They nearly split their heads in investigating the matter ; but no trace could be found. They took measurements and photographs of the rooms and chemically analyzed the walls of the buildings ; they examined and cross-examined a score of witnesses, accepting such evidence as agreed with the opinions which they had already formed, and rejecting that which seemed to them impossible or improbable, or for which there was no precedent to be found in their books.

Mr. Bottler was furious. He deeply felt his disappointment and mortification, which must have been very severe. He had already failed in securing a Unicorn and a Phoenix. The petrified wood of Noah's ark, which he had discovered, was by another scientist proved to belong to a species of tree existing posterior to that historical event ; in the remnants of the Tower of Babylon, about which he had written a book, a piece of a coffee-cup was found, bearing an inscription in English and the story of the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea

was by Mr. Bottler's opponents asserted to be a mere allegory. Now in addition to all that, the bottle wherein he had hoped to capture a Mysterious Brother still stood empty ; its open orifice gaping at him in a reproachful manner and as if asking to be filled and closed with Solomon's Seal. This new failure was therefore very annoying. His reputation as an expert in matters that belong to the occult was at stake. Something had to be done to save it. He therefore sat down and wrote deliberately a "Report" to the "Society for the Discovery of Unknown Sciences" ; from which we will extract in sum and substance the following points :

1. "The 'Talking Image of Urur' never had any real existence. It was merely an epidemic and collective hallucination caused by a dislocation of the normal threshold of consciousness.

2. "The Mysterious Brotherhood never had and never can have any existence ; for it is indisputable that if a class of beings in possession of superhuman intelligence were to exist, they would be intelligent enough not to let slip an opportunity to obtain the endorsement of well-educated and experienced scientists, together with their aid and assistance. The very fact that these 'Mysterious Brothers' failed to appear before a representative of the Discovery of Unknown Sciences, is *prima facie* evidence that there are none such, or that they are afraid of being examined.

3. "Viewed from a religio-philosophical-scientific point of view a belief in Talking Images and Mysterious Brotherhoods may without hesitation be pronounced to be a deplorable folly, a degrading and immoral superstition, which ought to be immediately frowned down.

4. "Your commissioner furthermore suggests that according to his exact mathematical calculations the 'Talking Image' must have had a specific gravity surpassing from 1,235 to 2,272 times that of Platina or Iridium and it consequently follows that its specific pressure upon any conceivable substratum

could not have been less than 4,040, nor more than 45,440 atmospheric pressures to the square-inch; a weight which cannot be resisted by any known material. It seems therefore, according to my calculations of probabilities, absolutely certain that the said Image is now on its way towards the centre of gravitation of this globe, and, according to the law of quadratic acceleration of velocity, it may be supposed to have already arrived at its destination."

Thus Mr. Bottler's report made for the time being an end to the belief in Talking Images and Mysterious Brotherhoods, and there were many who, although having seen and conversed with the Image, began to have serious doubts as to whether they had not been deluded, hallucinated or imposed upon in some inexplainable way; because seeing without understanding does not convey true knowledge, nor can any such knowledge be acquired by those who seek to understand that which they have never seen with the eyes of the body or with the eye of the spirit.

With the disappearance of the Talking Image the main source from which the members of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom received that information which constituted their "wisdom", was dried up and exhausted. It is true that there were many who continued to write under the influence of the spirit; but as their doctrines differed from each other, they must have been inspired by a variety of spirits, and could not all have been inspired by the Spirit of Truth.

Thus, while one eminent Fellow of the S. D. W. stated that the inhalation of carbonic gas through both nostrils was necessary to produce a sage; another not less eminent Fellow asserted that the inhalation of such a gas was deleterious to spiritual development and that it would be necessary to inhale pure oxygen by one nostril and blow it out by the other.

One authoritatively speaking Fellow found out that it requires a daily consumption of two pounds of cabbage and three

pounds of beans to turn a sinner into a Saint, while another writer, who claimed to be better informed, condemned cabbage and beans and wanted to raise a crop of Saints by feeding them exclusively on certain quantities of rice and asses'-milk.

One wanted to turn the people into Adepts by shutting them up in air-tight underground holes, another proposed for that purpose a small room of sun-dried clay, not more than six feet high and with only one window. Still others taught that to produce a Mysterious Brother it was necessary to sit cross-legged on the top of a mountain and to hold on to one's toes. Some suggested that a long woollen ribbon should be swallowed for the purpose of purification, and others proclaimed as the only means for salvation the internal application of soap and water.

But we will not enter into a more detailed description of the various external means by which the members of the S. D. W. expected to effect internal perfection, and how by the exercise of their own mortal will they expected to draw down upon them the Light of the Universal Spirit, which comes to man in no other way than by the *grace* of that Spirit alone. Important as the publication of such vagaries might be for the instruction of those who actually seek for Eternal Truth for its own sake and not for their own aggrandizement, their exposure might create ill feelings among some of the still living remnants of that S. D. W., which (we are inclined to imagine) does not exist any more. Ignorance has such an ugly face that whenever a mirror is held up before her, in which to behold herself, she becomes angry, but not any wiser by it.

Love of truth compels us to state that neither Pancho nor Mrs. Honeycomb nor Mr. Green made serious efforts to go through the gymnastic exercises prescribed for those who wish to become sages and saints. They had better things to do than to sit crosslegged ; trying to think of nothing. Mr. Green wrote a pamphlet, entitled : "*How I Became a Sage,*" and Mrs. Honeycomb perpetrated another, which bore the title : "*My Justification for Having Become Divinely Wise ;*" while Pancho

did a whole series of articles for the "*Truthmaker*;" the new journal of the S. D. W., wherein he clearly explained the theories on which Divine Wisdom was based; stating as fundamental principles, that there was nothing supernatural, and that everything was a product of nature.

Pancho was still thirsting for knowledge. He, like the rest, did not know that God can only be known to God, or, to express it in other words, that the Truth can only be known to itself. He wanted to grasp with his finite mind the mysteries of infinity. Not having the remotest conception of the nature of the true Faith, he, like the rest, imagined that intellectual understanding was the highest possible knowledge. He, like the others, did not know that divine truth can only be known in spirit and in truth, because it is permanent and divine; an eternal principle, which can therefore not be a product of nature.

Among the most prominent members of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom, there was a man whose name was Caramba, a very learned person and of superior intelligence. The most singular stories were circulating about him, as to how he was able to control the spirits of nature and make them obey his commands. He was regarded by many as being a member, in disguise, of the Mysterious Brotherhood, and it was in fact an open secret within the ranks of the S. D. W. that he had invented a telescope for discovering the Divinity in the Universe.

This man was said to be in possession of a mysterious and very ancient book from which he had learned all that he knew in regard to the mysteries of Nature and God. To obtain a look at that book was now all that Pancho desired; but in regard to this Caramba was extremely reticent, and only after repeated efforts Pancho succeeded in eliciting a promise from him that it should be produced.

"This book," said Caramba, "is not in my possession; it is hidden away in a tomb and guarded by grim Elementals. If

you have the courage to face those terrible powers of Nature, I may by your aid obtain possession of it."

Pancho declared that he was ready to dare everything for the sake of the truth, and proposed to go immediately to the tomb where the treasure was hidden.

"Such a difficult work," said Caramba, "can only be undertaken when the aspect of the constellations is favourable. When the sun enters the sign of Aries, we will begin the work. In the meantime prepare yourself by fasting and prayer."

Fortunately it was the beginning of the year and the time when the sun enters the sign of Aries was not far away. Soon that day arrived, and at midnight Caramba and Pancho went together to the tomb to rescue the *Book of Mysteries* from the power of the elemental spirits of Nature.

Dark was the night, and the clouds, like sombre fantastic shadows on a still darker background, were floating rapidly over the sky, driven by the wind that sighed in the tree tops. A storm was gathering in the West; huge masses of solid darkness were seen to advance excluding entirely from sight the light of solitary stars that here and there appeared through rents in the clouds. The road led them through a forest, and at last they stood before a dilapidated edifice, looking like the remnants of an ancient tomb.

Here they entered and descended by a flight of stairs into a subterranean vault. Overgrown with moss were the walls, as Pancho could feel by touching them with his hands on descending. Cautiously they went below and the first thing they saw, after striking a light, was a huge snake of a poisonous kind, gliding over the floor and disappearing in a dark corner.

"Thus," said Caramba, "when man descends within his own self, in search of the greatest of treasures, his soul, the first object that meets his sight after the mental darkness is dispelled is the snake of self-love being driven away by the light of divine wisdom."

Pancho listened to those words ; but they made no impression on his mind. He had never heard of a man descending within himself, and did not know how it could be done. As to finding himself, he thought that he had found his own self long ago. He had always lived in his thoughts ; that is to say in the realm of the Imagination. He did not know that there was another realm in which a man could live ; the realm of self-conscious Will.

Caramba now opened the bag which he had brought with him and which contained six candles, a book, piece of chalk, and a dagger. The six candles he lighted and stuck them on the ground in the form of a circle, and then by means of the piece of chalk he drew a smaller circle upon the ancient marble floor ; but the dagger he took unto himself, and bidding Pancho to follow him he entered the circle and opened the book which he had brought with him, and which was said to contain the secret formulas necessary to be pronounced for the conjuration of the elemental spirits of nature.

A glance at that book convinced Pancho that it was nothing more nor less than "*Ollendorf's Ready Method of Learning French*," whereupon he expressed to Caramba his surprise and astonishment ; but the latter said :

"I do not know French, and the sentences in this book are all gibberish to me ; but it will make no difference in which way I will arouse my will to defy the dwellers of the threshold, that stand guard over the *Book of Mysteries*. Listen in awe and be silent, and under no circumstances leave the magic circle that will surely protect you."

Thereupon Caramba began his conjuration, reading in a loud and solemn voice the words that were printed in that French grammar, and his voice sounded dismally, reverberating from the walls of the vault.

"*Monsieur !*" it sounded, "*s'il vous plait, donnez moi votre canif.*"

"*Oui, Monsieur, je vous le rendrai !*"

More and more terrible sounded the voice of Caramba, his eyes were lit up by a supernatural fire, such as causes the lion to avert his head from the penetrating looks of his guardian and the tiger to slink away from his intended prey. A strange influence seemed to pervade the air of the vault and caused the walls to tremble. Suddenly one of the lights went out and then another and when the sixth candle was extinguished by that invisible power which pervaded the place like some horror that can be felt by the soul, but neither seen with the eyes nor touched by the hands, groans and cries of distress were heard as if issuing from the bowels of the earth and strange forms flitted about in the gloom, that seemed to be alive and substantial; but they were not defined enough to show what character for good or for evil they were intended to represent.

Fain would Pancho have left; but his body was as if paralyzed—not with fear—but as by a withdrawing of his vitality that seemed to be absorbed by these invisible beings and give life to them. At last a gleam—as of some supermundane light issued from the ground, there appeared to be a cave in the floor, where before no such opening had been seen; and at the bottom of the cave was an open casket containing the scrolls that constituted the *Book of Mysteries*.

“*Est-ce que ces mouchoirs appartiennent à messieurs les étrangers ou à messieurs les anglais ?*” “*Non, monsieur, ils appartiennent à moi !*” sounded the voice of Caramba, assuming an indescribable pitch, and the scrolls were seen to rise from the casket, and as if carried by invisible hands, they floated into the circle and were laid at Caramba’s feet. As soon as this was accomplished a clap of thunder shook the earth in its foundation; the rain was heard to fall down in torrents above the vault; but within the cave all was tranquil, and as if ignited by some magic power the six candles were burning again.

“It is accomplished!” said Caramba. “The book which

has for centuries been promised to the world, is now in our possession. Thus is the will of man victorious over the inhabitants of the Astral Light."

Home they went through the mire and the splashing rain, and for several days Pancho kept on poring over the contents of the *Book of Mysteries*; receiving therefrom however no benefit; for although that book contained the greatest of truths, he was not in possession of the key necessary for their comprehension. That key is the understanding; for there can be no other key to the understanding of Wisdom, than Wisdom itself.

Many years afterwards, when *by the Mercy of God* a better light had come over Pancho's mind, he could see the wisdom of these contents; but at that time they appeared to him as utter folly and nonsense; so that he threw away the copies which he had taken, and of which only a few remnants have been recovered which we herewith present to the reader as examples to show what Wisdom was contained within that mysterious book.

Extracts from the "Book of Mysteries."

One of the scrolls preserved contained a prescription for the purpose of preserving perpetual youth. It read as follows:

"If you wish to preserve your youth, or after having become old, turn young again; rub yourself two or three times a week with the juice of Cassia, and every night before going to bed, lay upon your *heart* a plaster, made of the following ingredients:

"Oriental Saffron, Red Rose-leaves, Sandal-wood, Aloes and Amber."

"Liquefy the whole in a sufficient quantity of *Oil of Roses* and add enough of *White Virgin-Wax* to give it the necessary consistency. In the morning this must be taken off and carefully inclosed in a *lead box* (η) to be preserved till the following night, when it is again to be applied."

Another scroll contained a still more incomprehensible prescription. It was said to be the sum and substance of all that was necessary to prepare the *Philosopher's Stone* ; as it indeed is, as all will see, provided they are capable to understand its secret meaning. It was a prescription given by *Theophrastus Paracelsus* and was as follows :

“If you wish to prepare the true Philosopher's Stone, all you will have to do is to transform the moon in the sky into pure water, and throw her upon the earth. You will then have accomplished a great miracle. Clean her again from all impurity, and put her into her old place, and she will then shine more beautiful than before ; but if she is melancholy, put her into a bath of beauty, and paint her with the abiding splendour taken from the raw earth, a process that will be agreeable to her.

“Force her to remain in that bath for a while, and she will then remain voluntarily in it for ever, and you may render her tractable according to your pleasure.”

This was more than Pancho could endure. He had never heard of any other moon than the satellite of our planet, and, as a matter of course, nobody could treat her in the way prescribed by Paracelsus. He already felt his head swimming. He was now fully convinced that books on occultism were useless trash, and the hermetic philosophers nothing less than lunatics, that ought to be shut up in a madhouse ; and if these prescriptions had not been sufficient to produce in him that conviction, the reading of the following story contained in the *Book of Mysteries*, would have been alone enough to convince him.

“AN ALCHEMICAL STORY.

“A STUDENT of the secret sciences wanted to learn the art how to make pure gold by artificial means. He applied for instruction to a sage who had travelled for many years in the East, and was well versed in alchemy. At first the sage was

unwilling to teach the secret, but at last he consented. He gave to the student a little of a red powder in a small bottle, and told him to melt ten pounds of lead in a crucible, and then to add the tenth part of a grain of the red powder, boiling the same together for a quarter of an hour, after which all the lead would be transformed into gold. He, however, intreated and implored him, that during the time of boiling the lead, he should not let the thought of a rhinoceros come into his mind; "for," he said, "if you think about a rhinoceros during that time, the whole process will be spoiled, and you will have at the end nothing but boiled lead.

"Thereupon the student of the secret sciences promised to follow the advice of the sage. He immediately procured some lead and a crucible, and proceeded to try the experiment. He tried it very often; but every time, when the lead began to boil, the thought of a rhinoceros came into his mind, and the more he tried to avoid it, the more did he think of that beast, and his process was spoiled every time. At last the red powder was all gone, and the sage refused to give him another supply. Then the student, having wasted his time and his money, became very angry, and cursed the sage, and said that he would never have thought of a rhinoceros if the sage had not mentioned it to him."

When Pancho had finished reading the scrolls, he flung them into a corner. Full of disgust, he went to Caramba, and said:

"Do you want to make sport of me by representing to me a book filled with impossible prescriptions and puerile stories as being a book full of wisdom? Well it would be, if it had been left in the hands of the grim Elementals; for more stupid nonsense I never saw in my life."

"I always thought," answered Caramba, "that there was something queer about these prescriptions."

"And did it, then, never occur to you," asked Pancho,

"that all such books are written by madmen, published by idiots, and bought only by fools?"

"The fact of the matter is," replied Caramba, "that he who wishes to judge about religious matters correctly, and wants to know the secrets of Alchemy, must know in what country the Paradise was situated and what kind of apples grew therein. He must know of what kind of wood Noah's ark was built and what kind of animals were contained therein. What kind of water was transformed into what kind of wine at the wedding at Cana and what were the names of the parties that contracted the marriage. What kind of cement was used at the building of the Tower at Babylon, and from what kind of a tomb did Christ resurrect after His crucifixion. Where does the best Mercury grow and what is the original cause of the rainbow?"

To this Pancho answered and said:

"The fact of the matter is, that I care nothing about the place where the Paradise was situated, nor about the apples that grew in that garden. I am not interested in Noah's ark, neither do I care a straw about the animals that were contained therein. It is a matter of perfect indifference to me what kind of wine was made at the wedding of Cana, nor am I anyway concerned in the marriage of strangers. The cement used at the building of the Tower of Babylon was probably some kind of Portland cement, and the tomb from which Christ was resurrected was presumably like any other tomb in that country. Mercury is a mineral and does not grow upon trees, and as to the cause of the rainbow, if you ever come to a civilised country, most any schoolboy will be able to inform you about it."

So saying Pancho walked away.

Just about at that time a great split occurred in the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom. Some of the members had been led to disbelieve in the existence of the Mysterious Brotherhood, while others still believed in it, and as the truth

of everything that the Society knew or believed to know, depended on the say-so of those Brothers, it was a most serious matter, for it was said that if they existed, then that which was taught in their name must be true; while if they did not exist, then all must be false (a most logical conclusion!), and thus perhaps, for the first time in the history of the world the life of Universal Truth was made to depend on the existence of a body of unknown Adepts, instead of the existence of the Adepts depending on the presence of the truth.

Thus the Black Magicians in spite of all precautions taken by the secret committee of defence did their work most effectively. The storm of passion was aroused and different opinions clashed together like waves in a stormy sea in the outer circle of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom. But in the inner circle to which only those belonged that were more advanced, the initiated ones, to whom some of the more serious secrets had been confided, dissensions of a different character took place. There were some who said among the three Kings that appeared at the cradle of Christ, Melchior was the first, Balthasar the second, and Kaspar third. Others maintained that Melchior was the first and Kaspar the second; while still others attempted to prove by historical evidence, at once logical and convincing, that Kaspar was the first and superior, attributing to Melchior only an inferior character and to Balthasar no value at all.

Thus the inner section of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom became divided against itself in three different camps. There were the Melchiorites, the Kasparites and the Balthasarites, and they fought among themselves with the same intrepidity that characterised the theologians of the middle-ages when the world was stirred into commotion by their attempts to decide the important question, whether Adam in Paradise was or was not in possession of a navel.

But as to Pancho, we are sorry to say, he had become entirely indifferent to all that.

He cared no longer about the Mysterious Brotherhood, nor about the three Kings of the East, and he was even heard to utter the blasphemy, that it would be safer to put one's faith in common sense than in the assertions of Krashibashi or Rataraborumatchi or any other Adept, whether he existed or not. By expressing such views he made himself many enemies among the members of the Society for the Distribution of Wisdom. He finally resolved to return to his home.

CHAPTER XIV.

DISCOVERIES.

ON the evening preceding the day of his departure from Africa, Pancho took once more his accustomed walk to the seashore. Again the moonlight played with the frolicking waves and the stars shone in tranquil glory in the sky, quietly and indifferently, as if they knew nothing about blasted hopes and destroyed illusions. They dotted the ethereal dome that covers all nature, filling the air with a soft effulgence of light, causing it to appear as if all this ethereal realm were one grand and universal temple of the Holy Spirit, containing all beings without exception and lovingly embracing them all in spite of their follies, vices, and miseries.

It was a night fit for meditation ; a breath of peace, invisible, spiritual but nevertheless substantial seemed to pervade the breeze that came from the ocean, and a spirit of happiness seemed to linger around the shadows of the trees ; while Pancho, by means of some indefinable inner sense felt or believed himself to feel that all this glory in nature was not dead, but living ; that a consciousness of some kind filled all space, and it even appeared to him as if he could see ethereal forms of great beauty moving through the shadows and lingering in the light, looking at him and smiling at the inferiority

of his material senses, which enabled him to perceive only that which is of a gross and sensual character.

The stories which he had read in the *Book of Mysteries* passed in review before his mind. True, they were childish and silly ; but they seemed after all to contain certain truths. "What," asked Pancho himself, "if Spirit were actually something substantial and real, in spite of our incapacity to see it with our material eyes ? Is not love something invisible and nevertheless we can feel it ; not with our fingers but within the soul. But where can we find the true nature of spirit ? Alas ! where can we find real Truth ? I have in vain sought for it in our churches and schools and at the feet of the Hierophant. I have heard it described in various ways, and still I know nothing about it. Where can I find the power to perceive it myself ?"

Pancho stood still, looking out upon the moonlit waters, seeking for an answer to his question. Suddenly the sky became illuminated with a bluish light, a meteor flashed in the sky and descended into the ocean, where it was extinguished in the waves, and then the thought struck Pancho that the light of wisdom might descend in a similar manner within the soul and be extinguished in the carnal mind. It was a new idea to him ; but on considering it he found that it was unscientific and not supported by any recognized authority. He dismissed it as deserving no further attention.

He continued his way. The road led along the beach between clusters of cocoanut palms, swinging creepers and vines. Pancho listened to the sound of the waves as they rolled over the sandy shore and returned again into the bosom of the deep when they perceived that the earth was not their appropriate element. This reminded him of the days of old when he walked along the beach with his beloved Conchita, but now Conchita was dead. Perhaps her spirit was near. He often thought that he could feel its presence, although he had seen no more her ethereal form nor had she

spoken to him since that memorable night when he and Mr. Green practised *yoga*.

Suddenly Pancho stopped, for he heard the sound of a voice. It was a sweet female voice, singing in tones clear and strong an Italian song. The song was suggestive of the power of love and the longing of the soul for the unknown. The words translated into bad English might perhaps be rendered as follows :

“Star of the evening! Can you not tell
Where my sweet darling, my lover doth dwell?
Why does he linger away from his bride?
Why does he not hasten to come to my side?
Queen of the sky! O bid him to come
To his beloved, his sweetheart, his home.
Send him a ray of your glorious light;
Tell him to come in the hush of the night.

“Murmuring billows, softly and sweet,
Tell me when I my dear lover shall meet.
Roll to his feet and sing him a song;
Ask him, I pray, not to tarry so long.
Speak to him sweetly, lull him to sleep;
Kiss him for me, O you waves of the deep!
Whisper to him a message of love;
Greet him you earth and you starlight above.

“Ah! now I hear what the wavelets say;
‘Your own dear lover is not far away.
Deep in your heart is his dwelling of bliss;
He cannot leave it, earth’s daughter to kiss
There he is sleeping, dreaming a dream
Of the gentle young bride that is coming to him.
There you must seek him; there you will find
Your dearly beloved, your ——’”

“Ma-a-ry!” sounded a shrill voice from the interior of the building; “didn’t I tell you not to stand out in the night air and catch cold? Come in, quick!”

The song suddenly stopped, and as Pancho emerged from the grove of trees where he had been listening, he just caught a glance at the singer before she disappeared from the balcony,

She was a young girl ; her hands were folded, and her long dark hair fell over her shoulders. If he had not been convinced that Conchita was dead, he actually might have believed that this was herself.

"What does this mean?" thought Pancho. "What kind of a lover would that be, whom one could expect to find within one's self? What an absurd idea!" Nevertheless some internal feeling, some intelligence within the soul, such as has not yet been classified or recognized by science, seemed to tell him that if a person only knew all the spiritual treasures within one's own self, he would have no desire to seek for their imperfect semblances on the external plane. But again Pancho rejected this thought on account of its being unscientific and not supported by well-known facts.

"Can there be a higher consciousness than that of the mind?" he asked himself. He remembered that there are things which at certain times may be recognized, although the reasoning mind can form no conception of what they are. Beauty, Love, Truth, Justice, Majesty ; all these are things which must be existing, else they could not be recognized by something which men call "the soul;" nevertheless they are invisible and intangible, and the reasoning mind can form no conception of them. "What is music?" he said.

"According to science it is air in a certain state of vibration, producing a succession of sounds ; but what is the harmony that distinguishes music from noise? A noise acts upon the emotions"—he knew that very well, for more than once it had happened that he could hardly restrain himself from flinging a bootjack at the organ-grinder at his door—"but in music there is language and thought, although it would be difficult for one who knows nothing about the language of music to translate the separate sounds into words. Can any one recognize harmony in the universe, if he has no harmony in his soul? What then is this harmony which exists within oneself? Is it a spiritual power, such as the

alchemists use, and if so, how can there be a power unless there is a substance? Is it merely a state of the material atoms which compose the physical body? Are wisdom, love and intelligence, justice and truth states of polarity of what we call 'matter' without any addition of something higher? If so Captain Bumpkins is right and all men may be magnetized into virtue."

This method of reasoning might have satisfied Pancho's mind; but it did not satisfy his heart, and the heart persuaded the mind to continue the investigation. "Is then," said the mind, "harmony not superior to disharmony, and how can any one raise himself into a higher state, unless there is a higher power in him, to enable him to do so? How can any one give to himself a thing which he does not possess? We know that man has the power to render his mind harmonious and to control his will and emotions. If so, there must be something in man superior to the mind and superior to the emotions. What if it were in the power of mortal man to become conscious of the nature of that divine power and to know what it is?"

It seemed to Pancho as if he had made an important discovery. It was a new thought to him and he received it in his heart; and as he did so, a new field of consciousness seemed to spread out before his interior perception, joy filled his heart, and all the intellectual powers in his mind seemed to join in one grand anthem of jubilee, such as may have been sung when the Saviour entered Jerusalem riding upon a heretofore untrained ass; a feeling of happiness such as he had not experienced before pervaded his soul, and a flash like that of the meteor illuminated his mind; but immediately Doubt, the destroyer, appeared; he began to reason, and persuaded himself that all this was merely the effect of a morbid imagination, a product of the association of previously received ideas, unauthorized by science and not sufficiently proven by well established facts.

The Italian song to which Pancho had listened awakened in him a desire to go to Italy. Not without some regret did he take leave of his friends at Urur. Mr. Green bore the separation with stoical fortitude, Mrs. Honeycomb wiped an unborn tear from her eye. As to the Hierophant, he had not yet returned from his search after the subterranean hole, leading to Kakodumbala, the city of the Adepts.

We will not worry the reader by describing the voyage to Italy. Nothing remarkable occurred on this occasion, except that Pancho received his first lesson in occultism through the guruship of a monkey. It happened in the following manner :

There were two large-sized apes on board, a male and a female, belonging to the species Ourang-outang. They were quite tame, and allowed the liberty of the deck. They were very fond of each other, and played together all day, to the amusement of the passengers and the crew. One day, however, the male monkey fell sick, and refused to play, and then the female monkey seemed to be in terrible distress. All her efforts to cheer her mate were in vain, the male monkey grew worse and died. His body was thrown overboard. Then the female ape exhibited human emotions. She looked the very picture of grief, and would surely have wept if shedding tears were in the power of monkeys. She refused to eat, and three days afterwards she likewise died, and her body followed that of her mate into the watery grave.

All the passengers felt sorry for the poor animal ; but Pancho asked himself : " What if monkeys have the same emotions as men, and if they have, likewise, the power to reason ; what, then, is the difference between a man and an ape, except in degree of intelligence, and in the form of his organization ? If there is nothing else save thought and emotion in the bodies of men and of monkeys, and if these things are immortal, then surely a monkey is just as immortal as a man. If the animal consciousness of a man survives after the death of his body,

the consciousness of a monkey must likewise survive." Then the solution of the question came to him in some way, such as has not yet been explained by science, and, incredible as it may appear to the sceptic, he saw clearly, and was convinced beyond the possibility of a doubt that there was a power superior to the mind, and superior to the emotions; the same in men and in monkeys, and capable of producing emotions and thoughts; but that this power in an average monkey was not as highly and intelligently active as it is in average men. In making this discovery, Pancho knew he had found the way to the solution of the mystery of the divine knowledge of self. It was now clear to him that there is one eternal and universal power, manifesting itself in perishing forms in various ways, according to the conditions which these forms represent, and that while these forms, with all their thoughts and emotions, are passing away, the power which produces them continues to be, as is proved by the fact that it continues to bring new forms into existence.

"What if this divine power could become self-conscious in man? If man could unite his consciousness with the power that moves the universe? Would not this be the true Yoga, and the fabled union with God. It was thinkable that such a state could exist, but surely it could not be attained by magnetizing or hypnotizing oneself, nor by breathing through one nostril and then through the other, nor by feeding on asses'-milk, nor by swallowing a ribbon for the purpose of purification. It surely could be produced by nothing less than by the awakening of the divine consciousness within the secret regions of the soul. He was now sure that God was immortal, and surely the soul could only become immortal through God."

Pancho arrived at Naples. He wandered through the silent streets of ancient Pompeii, and the sight of these remnants of the glory of former days awakened in him thoughts about the

impermanency of forms. "Where," he asked himself, "are now the gay ladies and gentlemen that thronged these streets and enjoyed the sights of the arena? Their bodies have vanished into dust, their thoughts have faded away, their emotions are for ever at rest; but the spirit that deposited within their forms the germs of life and love and intelligence cannot have perished, for there are other men and women who did not exist in the days of Pompeii. This spirit must be something substantial, else it could not act upon substance, it must be superior to thought, else it could not produce thoughts; it must be superior to all the highest attributes of matter which we know, else it could not produce these attributes in the forms which it calls into existence. It is invisible to us and yet it appears to us in thousands of various forms, and, while the forms which it produces disappear, it seems to remain for ever the same, unchangeable, self-existent and independent of any other conditions except those that exist within its own self."

It must however not be supposed that these things were clear to Pancho's mind at all times. Whenever he was in a state of exaltation, that is to say, whenever he mentally rose up into the higher regions of thought, a feeling of supreme happiness filled his soul and then those things were perfectly clear to him, but when he began again to brood and to seek for scientific reasons and explanations of what he only spiritually perceived to be true; then it was as if all such spiritual knowledge had been expunged from his memory, and he did not himself understand or believe that which he had written down while in a superior state. It sometimes actually seemed to him as if man was capable of entering into various states of consciousness, each of them having its own perceptions and memory.

Thus Pancho loved to take aerial flights into the higher regions of thought, but something happened to draw his attention again to the world of illusions. One day, while

reading the *Giornale di Roma*, the following article attracted his attention :

"An Unexplained Mystery.

"If in these days of modern enlightenment we dare to present to our readers an account of certain mysterious occurrences, said to have taken place in the vicinity of this city, we feel it our duty to preface our statements with the remark that the fullest right to believe them or not must be reserved to the reader. Our tale is so wonderful that we would not have dared to bring it before the public, if we had not received our information from a number of highly respectable eye-witnesses, whose veracity, sanity of mind, honesty and intelligence cannot be doubted.

"It appears that not long ago a well-known artist, whose residence is in one of the suburbs of Rome and whom we will call Michaelae, made the acquaintance of some sailors that had just arrived from Africa. They had brought with them a very curious thing, such as has never before been seen in this country. It was a statue representing a woman. The figure was of life size and of beautiful workmanship, but what seemed to be most remarkable about it was that it was fitted out with some very ingeniously constructed mechanism, which enabled it to speak like a living person. Whenever a crank was turned,¹ it gave answers to questions ; but these answers were not after one pattern, like those of a parrot, but varied and intelligent like those of a being capable of reasoning.

"Michaelae was delighted with his discovery, and bought the Image for a comparatively small sum. He put it up in his studio and showed it to his friends ; but soon the trouble began. The statue told Michaelae what his visitors thought about him, and to the latter it said what he thought about them, and the artist had to fight several duels, in some of which

¹ This was an editorial mistake.

he was wounded. This was, however, not the worst. Michael had painted a large tableau, his masterpiece, of which he was very proud and which he desired to sell. It represented the temple of Fame, and in the centre was the goddess standing upon a cloud and distributing diplomas to all the celebrated persons that ever existed in the world. These were standing around in appropriate groups, waiting to be diplomized. There were Socrates, Plato and Pythagoras, Colonel Olcott, Confucius, Zoroaster, and General Booth in long white gowns, talking with General Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin, dressed according to the costume of their times, while Napoleon Bonaparte in high boots and spurs was standing near with arms akimbo, listening to their conversation. He was accompanied by Madame Pompadour, Joan of Arc, and Hypatia. In another group were Christ, Moses and Mohammed waiting for their diplomas; Beethoven and Mozart, each of them holding a little toy organ in his hand, while Fulton with a miniature locomotive, and Saint Laurence with the gridiron upon which he was roasted, were watching another group, composed of Sappho, Semiramis, Cleopatra and Messalina, who seemed to be flirting with Bismarck and Garibaldi. Raphael and Michael Angelo had brought their brushes and tools, ready to do a job, and were looking at Noah with a model of the ark in his hands, who was talking with Nero, Caligula and Julius Cæsar; while at a distance were Adam and Eve in their strictly historical costume, gathering apples seemingly to the great amusement of Pope Alexander, Richard Wagner and Nebuchadnezzar, who were attentively watching them. There were Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller, Columbus, Thomas Paine, Robert Ingersoll, Don Quixote and many other historical persons, whom space forbids us to mention. Michael prized the picture very highly.

“One day a Russian gentleman came and offered a considerable sum for this picture. Michael, however, asked for

more, and at last they agreed to let the statue decide how much the picture was worth. They asked the statue about it, and it answered :

“ ‘The whole idea represented by that picture is so absurd, that no reasonable person would give a penny for it. He who works for fame works for nothing. Diplomas are playthings for unripe minds, useless for anything except to tickle the vanity of the selfish. Those who love the truth for its own sake ask for no other reward. Those who are in possession of wisdom need no external sign to prove that they are wise. Beauty does not require certificates to show that it is beautiful ; but the fool needs a mask so that those who might meet him may be deceived.’

“ After hearing this speech, the Russian refused to buy the picture at any price and went away.

“ Michaele became very angry and came very near destroying the statue in his rage ; but he finally resolved to sell it to one of his friends whose name was Antonio and who kept a tavern at T . . . a place visited by many strangers. Antonio showed it to his guests, who were at first very much amused with it. Especially his wife was very pleased and offered many questions which were all answered by the statue. Among other things she asked : ‘Tell me, statue, who loves me best ?’ and the statue answered : ‘Signor Giulio ; and you know it well enough, for you have his love letters hidden away in a pot on the top shelf in the kitchen.’ The husband became nearly frantic. He went to the kitchen and found the letters of Signor Giulio, who is a lieutenant of the Carabinieri. A row was the result, and it is still doubtful how it will end.”

“This can be none else but the Talking Image,” exclaimed Pancho after reading the article. He was now certain that some invisible power had guided his steps to Italy, so that he might recover it. He hunted up the editor of the *Giornale di Roma* and asked him to divulge the address of Antonio. This the editor peremptorily refused to do, adding moreover that

Antonio had sold the statue and threatened to kill the first man who mentioned that subject to him. It had created—he said—a good many more troubles besides the one with his wife. It had caused a great many quarrels among his guests, who at first enjoyed the fun ; but as it told them plainly what they thought about each other, they became very angry and one after another left the hotel in a fury. The matter soon became known and crowds of people came to ask questions. Those who received answers became angry because it told them the truth ; those who did not receive any answer said it was a swindle devised by Antonio. The clergy heard of it and said as usual that it was the work of the devil. The Capuchines came to exorcise the statue ; but did not improve the state of things. They then excommunicated Antonio and nearly ruined his trade. Had he not removed the statue in time, he would have been either killed or would have had to leave the town. It is said that he succeeded in selling it to a German professor. It cost him a great deal of money to become reconciled with the Church and to hush up the matter.

Such was the account which Pancho received from the editor, but all his attempts to find out the name and address of that German professor were unsuccessful. The professor was evidently only a traveller in Italy and had probably returned home.

The disappearance of the Image had not only caused a public excitement in Africa, but the newspapers in Europe also took notice of it and gave many garbled accounts of it, not one of which was correct. Thus one of the leading Italian journals contained the following article, translated from a London paper :

“ A Daring Robbery in a Buddhist Temple.

“ Information has been received from Africa that a Buddhist temple at Urur has been robbed of one of its most valuable relics, the statue of a goddess. It appears that a European

by the name of"—(here Pancho's name was given in full)—
"took up his residence in the vicinity of the temple and entering the Shrine without being observed carried away the idol, said to be of inestimable value, it being made up of one single block of amethyst set with rubies and diamonds. It is reported that he made his escape on a steamer going to Naples. Detectives are on his track."

When Pancho read this account, he smiled at the ludicrous idea of being accused of carrying away a statue of the weight of the Talking Image.

"Nevertheless," he said to himself, "it will be best not to mention my real name to anybody, as it might cause me annoyance."

An invisible power seemed to attract Pancho to Venice. Was it the recollection of pictures which he had seen of the City of the Lagoon, with its moonlit quays, gondolas, historical palaces and prisons that attracted him there; or was it some invisible hand that guided his steps? Pancho went to Venice and took rooms in a hotel. When the inn-keeper came with the register and asked him to enter his name, he wrote down the first name that entered his mind.

"Ah!" said the landlord, reading it. "Mr. Krashibashi! I see you are a Hungarian. There is another Hungarian gentleman at the hotel. Perhaps you would like to be introduced to him."

"I wish to remain *incognito*," answered Pancho, "and I have been away from Hungary so long that I have forgotten the language."

He made up his mind to remain at Venice. He visited all the remarkable places of the city and among others the church of San Marco. It was a quiet place, fit for meditation, and what he admired there most was the tomb, with the dying lion, sculptured by Canova. "Verily!" he thought, "here is a Talking Image, accessible to every one and speaking

to everybody who understands its unuttered language. Its silence expresses more than can be expressed in words."

His frequent visits to the church of San Marco attracted the attention of a Catholic priest. This priest was a man of venerable aspect and unusual intelligence and of far greater tolerance than is usually found among the clergy. He approached Pancho and made his acquaintance.

"This tomb," said the priest, "is a wonderful piece of art and very suggestive of the immortality of the soul."

"It is suggestive," answered Pancho, "but it gives no positive proof of it."

"Such a proof," said the monk, "is unnecessary to those who believe."

"But there are thousands of well-meaning people who are unable to believe on faith," said Pancho. "To believe in a thing does not create it. A man may believe in his immortality all his life and nevertheless find himself swallowed up by death. What I want is proof positive of the soul's immortality, such intellectual proof that nobody can dispute. Let such proof be given and there will be a universal revival of religion."

"Does not the Bible give numerous historical evidences that there is a life after death?" asked the priest. "Was not Christ resurrected from His tomb?"

"Excuse me," said Pancho; "but what guarantee can you give that the Bible stories are true, that the marvellous things of which they speak have happened, that the Bible is divinely inspired, or that these tales are not to be taken in an allegorical sense? Please do not answer me in the usual phrases; that it is our duty to believe if we do not understand, and so forth. I have myself studied theology and I know the customary answers. Tell me something new."

"My dear sir," answered the priest, "to confess to you the truth, the Church has no positive proof of the soul's immortality; because religion is not a science. The Church takes

that immortality for granted, and as a matter of course as it is taught in the Bible. To learn the mysteries of the Deity would make it necessary that one should be in possession of the Holy Ghost and be able to write a new Bible."

"But what proof have you that there is such a thing as a Holy Ghost?" asked Pancho.

"None other," answered the priest, "but the doctrines of the authorities in which we believe. We live in accordance with the directions given by our books. If their statements are true, we will go to heaven; if they are wrong, so much the worse for us."

"It often seems to me," said Pancho, "that for everything that exists, there must be a sense by which that thing can be perceived. Is it not thinkable that there is an undeveloped sense in man, which might be developed so that he could perceive the presence of the Holy Ghost?"

"I have heard of such cases in the lives of the saints," said the monk. "It is said that some of them saw the heavens opened and that the Holy Ghost descended upon them in the form of a dove; but alas! the time for miracles is over; the heavens are now closed, and though there are lots of pigeons, there is no Holy Ghost among them."

Pancho's acquaintance with this priest led him to be introduced to one of the dignitaries of the Church, Cardinal Carlo. This Cardinal was universally known on account of his boldness and eloquence. He made several attempts to convert Pancho.

"Your lack of faith," he said, "is caused by a lack of love. Do you not know that the apostle said: 'If I were in possession of all the treasures of the earth and of all knowledge, what would it benefit me if I were deficient in love'?"

"But what object am I to love?" asked Pancho.

"Why! Christ, of course," answered the Cardinal.

"Unfortunately," said Pancho, "I am not acquainted with

Him. How can I love a man who lived so many hundred years ago?"

"If you remember," answered the Cardinal, "that this man is God, and that He has come down from heaven to die a cruel death for the purpose of reconciling His Father with mankind, a feeling of extreme gratitude must overcome you, which will surely kindle the fire of love in your heart. Read the Bible and see how much He has suffered, how He has been ill-treated and spat upon and how He was ultimately crucified, and all that for your own sake as well as for all mankind, and then tell me that you do not love Him for it."

"Alas!" said Pancho, "I have no historical proof that the story is true, and if it has actually happened, I can only feel pity for Him. Moreover, there are numerous other people who have died an even more cruel death. Some of them have been tortured and afterwards burned alive, and they have submitted to it with a hope of thereby benefiting humanity. Why should I not love Giordano Bruno as much as the man called Christ? To tell you the truth I am disgusted with His Father, for having used such abominable means to effect His own reconciliation. I cannot understand why He could not reconcile Himself with mankind without sacrificing His Son!"

"There are many things in religion," answered the Cardinal, "which no man can grasp within his reason. On such occasions the best thing to do is to shut one's reason up as in a prison, and believe in the doctrines. *Credo quia absurdum* is a very good maxim. The more absurd a doctrine appears to reason, the more is there a necessity for belief."

Pancho answered that such an unreasonable belief seemed to him to be merely a superstition and degrading to the higher nature of man. The Cardinal, seeing that Pancho could not be converted, discontinued his attempts and dismissed him, not without showing signs of his displeasure.

Once more Pancho passed a great deal of his time in reading the Bible; but he could find therein no proof of the immor-

talities of the soul. The stories he found there seemed to him so improbable, that he felt inclined at last to regard them as allegories, representing some mysterious and unknown spiritual process, instead of historical events, alleged to have happened in external life. But neither the priest nor the Cardinal could give him any other explanation except that they were historical facts. This seemed unreasonable to Pancho, and therefore he could find no external proof about a life hereafter except the fact that he had seen his wife's ghost.

The knowledge of having seen and communicated with her afforded him great consolation and happiness. It is true that her spirit had appeared to him no more since he had left Africa; but this could easily be due to the fact that he had never been since then in the necessary state of tranquillity to perceive her, or that Conchita's spirit, being of a very refined nature, had not sufficient power to communicate. But he was satisfied with the knowledge that she was alive and near him, and did not care for any more proofs.

One evening, as Pancho was standing before the tomb of Canova, he was interrupted in his meditations by the approach of a woman. She was past middle age, and dressed in the Italian style. When she saw Pancho she seemed surprised.

"Excuse me, sir," she said, "I have been sent to you by a sick lady. She is waiting to see you. Will you come with me?"

"My good woman," answered Pancho, "you must be mistaken. I am a stranger in Venice."

"I am not mistaken," replied the woman. "The lady described you to me exactly, and said that you were a stranger. She can see everything when she is asleep. She then sees things which nobody else can see, and she foretells things which are going to happen. I never saw the like of it in my life."

"Ah, a *somnambule*!" exclaimed Pancho. "This will be an interesting adventure. Perhaps I may find out through her the whereabouts of the Image. Let us go."

They went, and while on the way, Marietta—for that was the name of the woman—told Pancho that the lady was a stranger, and that she was ill-treated by her husband.

“He is very cruel to her,” she said, “and is as jealous as a Turk. It would not have been possible to take you to see her, if the *poltrone* had not gone away to Verona and left her alone.”

They arrived at a poor-looking house in the Via Albanese. Entering through an arched doorway which led into a stone-paved courtyard, they ascended a dark and narrow staircase, and the woman opened a door which led into a scantily-furnished room. Pancho entered, and before him stood a woman dressed in white with long black hair hanging loosely around her shoulders. Motionless, and with her eyes closed, she looked more like a statue of stone than a living woman. In an instant Pancho recognized the form before him. It was that of his beloved Conchita!

CHAPTER XV.

A DOUBLE PERSONALITY.

FOR one moment Pancho stood speechless with surprise. She whom he had believed to be dead and with whose spirit he had communicated face to face was before him—not a spirit but a human being with flesh and blood. There could be no doubt. She was visible not only to him but to Marietta. She had not yet passed through the portals of death.

But what a change had taken place in her! What a difference there was between the beautiful angelic being that had floated before Pancho's vision, and the emaciated form that stood here before him. True, there were still traces of beauty left upon her face; but that face was cadaverous, the eyes were now seated deep within their sockets; the lips had shrunk, her form was no longer rounded. Red spots upon her pale cheeks indicated consumption and the charms of the woman before him could not be compared with those of the ethereal being, the true Conchita, the spirit, nor with those of the woman with whom he had stood upon the balcony of the Cliff House. He almost regretted to find Conchita still alive and appearing to him in such an emaciated form.

Then it was that Pancho felt horrified at his own thoughts. It showed to him clearly that his love for her had been caused merely by her beauty and was therefore an animal

attraction, like that which had caused the female monkey to die.

"What," he asked himself, "is a love whose existence is dependent on the qualities of a form? Can there, perchance, be a higher kind of love, one that is self-existent and divine and which does not need any objective shape to call it into existence?"

As if in answer to his thoughts, Conchita said:

"The sun exists independent of the objects in which his light becomes manifest and likewise the sun of divine love is an eternal spiritual power, self-existent and independent of the objects which it illuminates. Forms cannot exist without love; but that which produces love is not created by form."

This was indeed Conchita's voice. Doubt was no longer possible. Pancho stepped forward toward the *somnambule*, preparing to touch her, when she lifted her hand and made a motion, as if she would not have him approach her.

"Do not touch her," she said, "for now you are cold as ice, and your touch would revive the powers of darkness that have happily fallen asleep. Free-born is the spirit, but heavy the chains that bind it to the material clay. The soul loves light, but must return to its dungeon when the animal powers awaken."

"Alas!" exclaimed Pancho. "How strangely you speak! Do you not know me; and are you not Conchita? Have you become a medium, and has some strange spirit taken possession of you?"

"No, Hasmaline!" answered Conchita. "It is her own self that speaks to you, now that the lower elements of her body permit its voice to be heard. When these elements are awake her body does not represent her true self, for the powers of evil have taken possession of the house which ought to be a temple of the Divine Spirit. When she is awake, she sleeps; but when she sleeps she is truly awake. Do not mistake the instrument for the power. Do not mistake the light of the

sun that illuminates a diamond for a production of the diamond. All human bodies are mediums through which natural forces act; all souls are instruments through which the Spirit of Wisdom may become manifest."

"Why do you call me Hasmaline?" asked Pancho, to which the *somnambule* answered:

"Is man, while in that spiritual sleep which he calls wakefulness, so entirely forgetful of his true nature and of the tribe to which he belongs, that he cannot remember his home? Our personalities, O Hasmaline, belong to this inferior planet, earth; but you and I are not bound to this single speck of dust in the universe. For millions of ages we have known each other. I have revolved within the orbit of the planet to which I am bound and where I find happiness; but you love to roam through space and will continue to do so until your cometary existence will come to an end at last, and you become engulfed in the glory of the sun that attracts you by the power of his divine love."

A struggle for the recognition of something which had no existence for him took place in Pancho's mind. For a moment he felt himself in a new world of light, surrounded by the most beautiful and radiant forms, but to see which he could not open his eyes.

One short moment, and his arguing intellect regained mastery over his mind and persuaded him that these things were delusions, unsupported by well established facts.

"Alas," he said, "I see that you have gone completely mad, and it is all my own fault!"

"Do not think, O mortal," continued the entranced form, "that the spirit which gives you life is a nonentity and the belief in it a delusion. Your consciousness is at present limited to your terrestrial state of existence; but there are other states, far superior to the one of which you are now aware. Your personality is ephemeral like that of the insect which is born to-day and dies to-morrow; but the Spirit of

man, O Hasmaline, has existed for millions of ages. Always the same in its divine essence, it is for ever changing its manifestations in bodies, working its way into form, and through forms, until it awakens to find itself a god."

"Gone!" sighed Pancho. "Entirely gone. Oh, how I wish you would say something reasonable!"

"How insignificant," went on the entranced woman, "is all the knowledge of terrestrial things when compared with the divine self-knowledge of the spirit. Can you not feel, O mortal! celestial love pervading all space? Can you not see the substantial light that surrounds you and which your spirit breathes? Can you not know yourself one with the universal Mind whose harmonies vibrate throughout the universe? You know only one little world; but there are worlds within worlds and systems within systems whose limits even thought cannot reach, and still all that unlimited infinitude exists within one's own self-consciousness. It is 'I.'"

"Oh!" said Pancho. "What a pity your reason should be so entirely gone! Can it ever be restored?"

Without paying attention to this remark, the somnambulist assumed an attitude of prayer, and spoke the following words:

"Within myself shines the sun, the changing moon and the glittering stars. Oceans are stored in my breast, my breath pervades the world, and my heart is a living fire in which all created things are for ever consumed. Within myself resides the glory and splendour of the universe, and my dominion is the kingdom of joy. Wherever I am, there is peace and happiness and divine harmony; wheresoever I do not manifest, there is disorder and suffering. Open, O mortals, your hearts to the sunshine of eternal truth, and let divine thoughts descend upon you like rain-drops from heaven! Fill yourselves with the wine of love and feed upon the feast of the celestial manna prepared for you. Open the gates to that place where the lamb and the lion lie down together, and behold the King in whose hands is the restoration of all peace."

"Oh, what nonsense!" groaned Pancho. "Oh, that your reason could be called back!"

"A veil has been thrown over her external understanding," answered Conchita. "Her imagination is beclouded by the power of Sorcery. Still the light of the spirit clings with its roots to the centre of her being, and there is hope that the elements of darkness will be destroyed by the omnipotent power of love."

"Where is Juana?" asked Pancho.

"Birds love their nests, and wolves their dens. The child of the forest has returned to her parent."

"Now you speak sensibly," said Pancho; "but how unfortunate it is that you have lost your mind and speak of yourself as if you were not yourself and of me as if I were another!"

"Know, O mortal," she replied, "that to the truly enlightened the world of those illusions, which you call corporeal forms, does not exist."

"How?" exclaimed Pancho. "Do you mean to say that my body which I can see and feel has no individuality? Do you mean to insinuate that my living and sentient form, and not only mine, but all others, have no substantiality or reality in them, that all our personalities are merely as shadows dancing upon a wall? Did God create a world of illusions for the purpose of misleading mankind?"

"No!" answered the speaker. "Existence is real, and forms are made to represent truths. It is man himself who makes himself illusions, and deludes himself by mistaking the forms for that which they only represent. Thus he mistakes the form for the spirit and the house for him that inhabits it.

"The soul, O mortal, is far too grand to be imbedded and swallowed up in material clay. It resembles the boundless sky in whose infinitude floats a little cloud of visible matter, reflecting the light of the sun. This ever-changing cloud represents the terrestrial personality, reflecting a part of the

light of the spirit. The Light itself is the *real* Being. Forms are merely instruments for its manifestation, and it manifests its activity according to the qualities and capacities of the form. The personality with its ever-changing states of consciousness, its variable thoughts and emotions, is continually born, continually dies. It is reproduced again from day to day; and when at last the form is dissolved, the Light gathers to itself once more the rays which it lent to the form."

"Is there, then, no real or permanent form?" asked Pancho.

"Not until it has imbibed the *Elixir of Life*," answered the speaker.

"And where can that Elixir be found?"

"It is with us wherever we go, and we can find it nowhere except within ourselves. It was even before the day of creation began and it still is, and will be. It is 'the Life and the Light of men, that light that shineth eternally in darkness, and darkness comprehendeth it not.' Men are not themselves the light, they can only 'bear witness' to it, by becoming instruments for its manifestation."

"But," put in Pancho, "the light shines also in a diamond, and renders it bright, and when the light disappears the diamond gradually loses its luminosity."

"Thus also," she replied, "the wind blows within the trees, and blows out again, carrying with it the dead leaves to drop them on the ground. Likewise the breath of the spirit passes in and out of the soul. To fasten it there by the power of faith, and to render it firm as a rock: this is the secret of the *Philosopher's Stone*."

"What do you mean by 'Faith'?" asked Pancho. "Surely to believe one's self to be in possession of a thing is not sufficient to obtain it?"

And the woman answered:

"Mere belief is not faith. True faith is a magic power that

overcomes all obstacles and which no one knows, except he who is in possession of it."

"Why then," he asked again, "is this great mystery not taught to mankind? Why do our clergymen not preach it from every pulpit, so that all men may find Light in themselves, and by clinging to it become immortal?"

"It has been taught and is still taught by thousands of tongues; but those who teach it do not recognize it themselves. They speak of it as if it were a dream or fable, and therefore their words have no power. It is the true Light which shineth within every man that cometh into the world, but the world knoweth it not, and will not receive it. From the unavailing efforts of the material intellect to perceive the light of the Spirit arise all your struggles. Intellect would seek in vain for truth within the realm of Imagination, and does not penetrate into the heart where the Light can be found. Those who thirst after truth must go to the fountain. There are many who imagine that they love truth; but their love is adulterous. It only seeks for the gratification of self, and not for the attainment of Wisdom."

Meanwhile, night was fast advancing. There was no lamp or candle in the room, but the moonlight shone through the window, and its beams fell upon the white-draped form of Conchita, as she still stood motionless, and thus resembling the Talking Image of Urur, as Pancho had seen it on that memorable day when he had seen the rosy light entering the cold stony Image. He remembered how he had wished that this light could enter himself, likewise, and fill him with knowledge. Then the entranced woman, as if divining his thought, uttered the following words:

"There is nothing to prevent the Holy Spirit of Wisdom from manifesting within the human consciousness, except that the minds of many are obsessed by erroneous doctrines, misconceptions, and unholy desires, the products of their own imagination. Ignorance darkens the mirror of the soul, and

thus prevents the truth from reflecting itself therein in all its purity."

And now a tremor seemed to pass through Conchita's frame, who said: "Go now, my friend. Her body is about to awaken to consciousness, and she must not see you. Go!"

Pancho reluctantly left, and, giving his address to Marietta, made arrangements with her to be informed every day about the condition of the patient.

We will not stop to discuss on what pathological grounds Conchita's abnormal condition could be explained, especially as the medical authorities, whom Pancho consulted, did not agree in their opinions about it. Some said it was merely Hysteria, others assured him that it was nothing but Hypnotism connected with unconscious cerebration. One authority swore that it was a case of spinal meningitis, and a professor of "psychology" declared it to be a pathological condition of the vasomotoric ganglia. Some advised bleeding, others large doses of morphia with bromide of potassium, and still another, cauterization by means of a white-hot iron. None of these remedies were, however, accepted.

But whether the utterances of the patient were the ravings of a maniac, or inspired by a superior spirit, at all events, they caused Pancho to reflect very deeply. He made up his mind to seek within himself for that interior Light, by whose knowledge it was said one could learn more important truths than from any information coming from outside sources, be they what they may. He tried to practise concentration of thought, that is to say, to collect his thoughts and to keep them upon one single idea instead of permitting them to disperse in various directions; and, after a comparatively short time, he found a great deal of internal tranquillity within himself, although he did not find the Light. Then it was that the meaning of an allegory which he had read in the Bible became clear to him. It was that passage which describes how the disciples went in a ship, and the sea arose by reason of a great wind. They had

great fear, but they saw somebody walking upon the troubled waters and He spoke to them: "'It is I; be not afraid.' Then they willingly received Him and *immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*" This he supposed meant that the peace comes to those who do not reject it, and that with the recognition of truth, doubt and discontent disappear.

Let us now return to the Via Albanese and see what took place in Conchita's room after she awakened from her trance.

We find her resting upon a lounge, her eyes wide open and her hands folded over her head. Gazing at the ceiling she seems to be thinking as if trying to remember a dream. After a while she calls Marietta, and the latter enters the room.

"Marietta," says Conchita, "give me some strong brandy. I feel very bad."

Marietta disappears and soon enters with the desired liquid. "How is your head?" she asks.

"It is all right now," answered Conchita; "but I had such a silly dream. It seemed to me as if snakes and reptiles were crawling into my brain. I combed my hair and out came little scorpions that had just been hatched and they fell upon the floor. There was a curious insect with four heads among them, and they looked like the heads of birds. I put my foot upon it and killed it."

"You ought not to imagine such things, Mrs. Smith," remarked Marietta; "and it would be better for you to pray."

"Pray to whom? to the devil? Know, that I do not imagine such things. I see them; they are perfectly real to me, and you must be blind if you cannot see them. And mind! do not call me 'Mrs. Smith,' because I dislike that name. Call me simply Juana."

Marietta was horrified at Conchita's profane language. She was a very pious woman, who not only grieved sincerely about the sufferings which Jesus had incurred at the hands of the

Pharisees, but used to cry for hours because Nebuchadnezzar had to eat grass for seven years, and wept very bitterly over the story of Joseph, sold into captivity by his own brothers, even for less than what he was actually worth. She was a devout Christian, in the habit of saying her prayers regularly, although she did not know that praying required abstraction of thought.

"It is very wicked of you to talk in that way," she answered, "especially as you spoke so nicely when that doctor was here."

"Was there any doctor here?" asked Conchita. "Did I not tell you to let no one enter my room when I have one of my fits?"

"It was yourself who sent me for him," answered Marietta.

"If he comes again," said Conchita, "get some boiling water and throw it over him. I do not want to have any doctors around me when I am in one of my fits. They know nothing and can do me no good."

"One never knows how to please *you*," grumbled Marietta. "Your parents must have had great trouble with you when you were a child."

"I never was a child, and I never had any parents," replied Conchita. "At least I do not remember anything about such sorts of things. I have been Mrs. Smith all my life."

"How can that be?" exclaimed Marietta.

"All that I remember," went on Conchita, "is that I once had a fit, or fever, or some sort of disease, and when I recovered I was Mrs. Juana Smith. But of what happened before that time I have no recollection whatever, and my husband says that it is none of my business to know it. Nor do I care for it. I would rather enjoy the present than worry about what happened in the past. Will it not soon be time for the Carnival?"

"Yes, it begins in two weeks."

"Ah, well. Then you and I will go to the masquerade and have some fun."

Thus it was evident that Conchita was leading a double existence. When in her higher state of consciousness or "trance," her mind was at perfect rest and her own imagination inactive, she served as an instrument through which some superior spirit, perhaps her own, could manifest its wisdom and use her organs of speech. But when the functions of her own physical brain again began their work by the awakening of her external consciousness, she exhibited all the traits of Juana. In fact, it seemed that she had come so much under the influence of that Indian girl, that it was as if a part of Juana's very self had been implanted into her soul. Her sickness was apparently caused by the influence of that foreign element. At the time when she had come under the full control of her "magnetizer," he had commanded her to forget her whole past life and to believe that she was Mrs. Smith. All this is neither very wonderful, nor very incredible, for similar experiments have since then been performed by means of what is called "hypnotism," or to express it in plain language, by a transmission of will.

Two days after the events described above, Pancho was again called to Conchita, whom he found entranced as before, and his visit was frequently repeated. And now we might write a whole volume of the teachings which Pancho received from her. But we cannot attempt to give in these pages even a tithe of them. A few extracts from some of the more comprehensible ones must be given as characteristic specimens.

SOME SPIRIT TEACHINGS.

"All thinking minds are instruments for the influx of thoughts and ideas; in each the truth may be reflected; but only those who are in possession of self-knowledge can dis-

criminate between the true and the false, and open the door to the true while rejecting that which is false. Absolute truth is self-existent and One; it cannot be divided, but when its rays are reflected in various minds their appearances change, while the truth which they represent remains always the same. Thus our terrestrial light comes from the sun and still the sun remains undivided. His rays are reflected in the rose as 'red,' in the tulip as 'yellow,' in the lily as 'white.' Roses, tulips, and lilies die, the sunlight disappears from us at the approach of night, but the Sun and his light remain unchanged in space."

"The All is an indivisible Unity, producing differences merely in the modes of its manifestations. The substance of all is essentially one; differences exist merely in their outward appearances; there can be no essential difference between Matter and Mind, nor between the essence of one being and that of another. We are all one in the spirit although we seem divided by form. All things are thoughts and all thoughts are things, rendered corporeal by the Will. Man is composed of thoughts made 'flesh,' and each of his thoughts presents a part of himself. Forms are conceptions of the mind, and changeable conceptions produce changeable forms; only when the truth is conceived as it is, and not merely as what it appears to be, will the true conception be found."

"All states of consciousness from the highest down to the lowest, are manifestations of one Consciousness, and as there are no breaks in the continuity of evolution, there must be numerous grades of conscious beings or intelligent powers in the universe, from the first manifestation of Divine Wisdom down to where consciousness becomes manifest merely by attraction or gravitation. There is a law of harmony, determining which sounds and which colours form harmonious accords, and likewise determining the conditions of the association among superior and inferior beings. That which is not in unison with divine harmony is a discord in nature and will disappear."

"No one can know and realize any other truth than that which exists within his own being. As the Sun is the luminous centre from which all the parts of his system receive their light, likewise there exist at the centres of the Microcosm of Man a spark of a Divine Sun from which his world receives its light. He who penetrates to that centre may know all things, for all knowledge is contained in God. Books can teach man nothing which his spirit does not already know; they are merely mirrors in which men may see their own ideas reflected; they are means by which the knowledge of the spirit may be assisted to come to the consciousness of the external understanding of Man."

"Men imagine that they have their own independent thoughts and ideas. Nevertheless each one is a mirror in which the images of existing thoughts emanating from others are continually reflected; most men do not think what they will, but they think what they must. Reason alone is the great arbitrator of thought. It decides what thoughts should be admitted and which ideas should be rejected. Only when men's will becomes free by being illuminated with divine reason, will men become self-thinking and free. Men do not originate new ideas; it is the reflection of already existing ideas that become alive and conscious in their minds. Learn to shut the door of your mind to low ideas and Divinity itself will do its thinking in You. Keep your mind directed towards the source of all Light within yourself and the Light will not fail to come."

On one occasion she said: "He only is truly *Man* who possesses the dignity of Man. The snake is crawling in the dust but the eagle rises upwards towards the sunlight. I was smitten with disease when I was in darkness; but when I found the Light I was made whole; the clouds in my mind vanished, and my soul became clear as a crystal; the Light gave me power over the elements and spirits became my servants. When I ceased to be an animal, I became acquainted

with human beings. My world was dark, but I saw the Star of the East and became transfigured by the Light. Let there be room for the Light, so that your interior senses may be opened to the perception of truth."

Such passages as the above were as incomprehensible to Pancho, as they will probably be difficult to some of our readers. He did not obtain any explanations from the *somnambule*, nor did he dare to ask for them; for on such occasions she looked like a superior being, unapproachable, and like one transfigured into a saint.

Thus on another occasion she said: "God needs Man for the purpose of revealing Himself in His own perfection. He is the powerful spring which gives Life. The seed is only one; but there are many powers contained in it. In the centre is God, breathing upon the soul, and there the manifested One speaks the word that calls the dead to life. From the Centre comes the Light that permeates the interior chambers, illuminating the whole of the temple, even the physical body of man. In the centre is Unity, three in one, body and soul and intelligence. God is great and Man is little, but man may become great in God as a tree may grow out of a little seed. Not from one part of the world nor from another comes the Light, but from the Interior. In the Heart is the cradle in which the new-born in the spirit is breathing. When Man enters the world he inherits the sin of the flesh by the blood of which his form is generated; but the Children of Light have cast off that which is impure, and broken the shell that excluded the Light. Love is the root of the Law, it includes all powers; seek for the heart that pulsates with Love, and over which the blood has no power."

When asked about the correctness of the speculations of our modern psychologists, physiologists, spiritualists, theosophists, rationalists, and other "ists," she said: "Those who seek for the truth in external things are in error. Their space is empty, and they wander about like the blind, each one seeking

to enjoy the fruits that belong to another. Those who have attained self-knowledge do not wish to triumph over them, but to aid those who desire to obtain it, and how could they be aided better than by having a mirror held up before them in which they may recognize their infirmities? Truth is self-existent and independent of the opinions of men; it needs no one to defend it; but men need our aid to defend themselves against error. The truth is not born by men; but men are reborn by the recognition of truth. It must be found in the realm of truth and not in the realm of fancy. You who desire peace, do not enter the battle for truth; but battle against your own errors, and the truth will come to your aid. 'Throw away every false belief and follow me,' says the voice of the spirit. Renounce the illusory treasures of Egypt, deluded rationalism and dogmas, and enter the Holy Land of the spirit. Knock at the door of eternity; it is within and not outside of you. Faithfully turn your eyes towards the sublime and immortal spirit within you. Your interior heaven will be opened, and you will know the mysteries which are beyond the grasp of your intellectual reasoning and argumentation. Peace be with you."

Such were some of the teachings which Pancho received through the mouth of the entranced Conchita. Whether they were the reflections of his own unconscious ideas, whether she was possessed by spirits or inspired by members of the Mysterious Brotherhood, or whether these doctrines came from the Spirit of Truth itself, he did not know. He looked upon them with suspicion and his intellect often tried to persuade him that they were the ravings of an insane woman; but in his heart he felt that they were true, and after many stormy battles his heart won a victory over the brain.

During all this time it was Pancho's desire to obtain an interview with Conchita when she was not in an entranced condition; but to this the controlling influence whatever it was, did not consent; giving, however, no other reason but

that it would not be well for Conchita to see him, and Pancho did not dare to disobey.

Marietta was enjoined to keep strict silence in regard to these interviews; and Pancho told her nothing about his relations to Mrs. Smith, except that he had known her before she took that disease in which she lost her memory and before she was Mrs. Smith.

He gave Marietta a ring, asking her to present it under some pretext to Mrs. Smith. It was a ring which he had received from Conchita herself and with the letters "P. C." engraved in it. Conchita received the ring but did not recognize it.

Pancho saw Conchita only during her states of trance when her lower consciousness was not aware of his presence, and his desire to see her in her normal condition became very strong. He persuaded himself that it was not mere curiosity that made him wish to see her when she was awake; but that from a scientific point of view it would be most interesting and useful to do so. Moreover, the time of the Carnival was approaching, and he knew that this might offer him a chance to see and observe Conchita without being seen by her. He made arrangements with Marietta to bring "Mrs. Smith" at a certain hour to the piazza; while he himself would be there masked and disguised. Marietta promised to obey. Conchita was very anxious to see the grand masquerade, and consequently two dresses were procured; that of a Neapolitan peasant woman for Marietta and for Conchita one to represent her as a gipsy queen.

During all this time Mr. Hagard, or, as he now called himself, "Mr. Smith," came occasionally to Venice and went away again. Nobody knew where he went, and nobody cared to know. It was believed that he had business at Verona; but he was not very communicative on this subject, and kept his own counsel for reasons best known to himself. Strange to say, Conchita never had any of her "fits" when he was at home.

In the intervals between his visits to the *somnambule*, Pancho made some attempts to follow the teachings received from her, and which he found to be identical with those of the Image. He tried to collect his thoughts and to keep them collected, and then to penetrate with them deeper within his own interior world; but he found that it cost heroic efforts to do so; for whenever a certain point of concentration was reached, other images and thoughts, especially that of Conchita, would float up before his mental vision and distract his attention, so that he could not enter into the depths of his own being, and thus he found that it is very difficult to rise above the realm of illusions and to cross the threshold of the sanctuary where the true Reality can be found.

The day of the great masquerade appeared, and the whole of Venice was in a state of excitement. Gay masks went through the streets, rode in gondolas upon the canals, and invaded the houses to play practical jokes. Strangers arrived in great numbers; the hotels and boarding houses were full of pleasure-seeking humanity: bands played, and great preparations were made for the grand tournament, which was to be the most prominent event of the season.

Mr. Hagard had returned from one of his mysterious voyages, and seemed to be in a better humour than usual: it seemed as if he had succeeded in some scheme, but what it was, no one seemed to know.

As it may interest some of our readers to study Mr. Hagard's character, we will pay some attention to him. He was no worse a villain than hundreds of others one daily meets in the streets, men who occupy respectable positions in the ranks of society. He would not have murdered a man for his money, nor broken into a bank, nor forged a cheque, nor done anything which would involve a risk of coming in conflict with the law. He was even believed to be a pious man, and in his younger days he had taught a class in a Sunday school. But with all that he believed that if one man could

get, by his wits, the best of another, he was justified in doing so, and there was no villainy which Hagard would not have committed, provided it was not prohibited by legal enactments.

We will leave the gay throng on the piazza and go to a place near the arsenal, which was now almost deserted; for all the working-men had a holiday and every one who could had gone to see the great masquerade. Here we find Mr. Hagard and a stranger engaged in conversation.

"I have put myself entirely in your hands," said the stranger, "and I hope that you will not take advantage of my faith in your honesty. A man, a word!"

"You may trust me entirely," said Mr. Hagard. "I know how to keep mum. I have looked over the plans of the factory, but I want to see myself how the engine works."

"It is the most difficult thing to introduce you into the factory," said the stranger. "No visitors are ever admitted, and all the workmen are put under oath, bound to keep the strictest secrecy, and to never let any outsider see the machinery. If the superintendent were to find out that I have permitted you to look at the engine, I should be immediately dismissed, and I have a family to support."

"Suppose you get me the key to the engine-house," said Mr. Hagard. "I will then admit myself. The worst thing that can happen to me if I am discovered is that they will put me out."

"But what will you say if they ask you how you got in?" asked the stranger.

"I will say nothing," answered Mr. Hagard; "because I do not understand your accursed Italian; and if they ask me in English, I will tell them that I tried the door and found it open, and walked in out of curiosity."

"I will get you a key," said the stranger. "But what have you concluded in regard to the conditions which I proposed to you at our last meeting?"

"Let me see," said Mr. Hagard. "I am going to pay your

expenses for going from here to Sacramento, and to give you a half-interest in the profits of the factory which I am going to establish, and of which you are to be the superintendent. You are to put up the building and the engines and to get everything in working order."

"That was the proposal," said the stranger, "and in addition you will pay me five thousand dollars when I get ready to start. I must have something to live on before the thing is in shape."

"I agree to it," said Mr. Hagard; "but I must see how the engine works. I want to know the whole process, because, if anything were to happen to you on the voyage, I and my factory would be left in the lurch."

"I have written it out plain enough for any child to understand," said the stranger. "I have made all the necessary drawings and calculations. I will hand you the papers on the receipt of the five thousand dollars, when our contract is signed. I will give you a key to the engine-house, and let you know the best time when to sneak in without being observed."

"Very well!" said Mr. Hagard. "I will leave Venice to-night and be at Trieste in the morning."

"All right," said the stranger. "I shall be at the appointed place. It is an immense scheme. There are millions in it."

"Millions!" groaned Mr. Hagard.

The stranger took leave and went away, and Mr. Hagard walked off in another direction.

We will now return to the piazza, where we find Pancho watching the crowd near the landing-place, where according to his agreement with Marietta he was to meet his wife. At a short distance from where he stood, a harlequin amused the crowd, and his remarks were received with shouts of laughter. Pancho wore no mask but the usual cloak; and his face was covered with a vizor. This circumstance gave rise to some jocular observations.

"What do you represent?" asked a mask, dressed as a monster.

"A man," answered Pancho.

"Then," said the monster, "you ought to have chosen a different costume, for a modern European dress does not represent the true character of men, it merely shows their complexity, with an irregular flap here and another one there, all stuck together to adapt themselves to the form; but nothing made out of the whole cloth, to show unity and simplicity as did the ancient Greeks. Look at me, I represent a man as much as you."

"Not all men are such monsters as you are," said Pancho.

"If they were all to show their true character, you would find more monstrous ones than myself."

"Do not men usually show their true character?" asked Pancho.

"No," answered the mask. "Most men go disguised all the year round and show themselves as they are, only at the time of the Carnival."

"You are an amiable monster, but not over polite."

"Politeness itself is a mask," was the answer, "which cannot be laid aside, except at the time of the Carnival."

Just then a gondola approached the landing-place. It contained two ladies, of whom one was dressed like a Neapolitan peasant woman and the other a gipsy queen. They wore no face-masks and Pancho immediately recognized Conchita.

The gondola landed within a few yards from where Pancho stood, and the ladies stepped ashore. At this moment the monster, evidently desiring to play a practical joke, approached Pancho and pulled the vizor from his face. For a moment the gipsy queen stared at Pancho; then uttering a cry she fell upon the steps that led down to the water edge. A stream of blood flowed from her mouth, her eyes closed, and she seemed like one dead.

Pancho rushed to her assistance and lifted her back into

the gondola. But at this moment an unforeseen occurrence took place. The accident had attracted attention, and among the many that rushed to the spot, there was a man dressed like a Turk who recognized Pancho and called upon the police to arrest him.

"This is the man," he cried, "who stole the 'Image' from the temple of Urur. There is a reward offered for his capture."

"A church robber!" exclaimed some of the crowd.

A clown, who proved to be an *employé* of the hotel where Pancho lodged, interfered. "This gentleman," he said, "is no bandit. He is Mr. Krashibashi."

"No!" cried the Turk, who was none other than Mr. Puffer, who on his voyage to Africa had stopped at Venice; "he is not Krashibashi. He is a church-breaker, a villain, a knave. He has failed in his chelaship, and now he has become a Black Magician. Arrest him!"

"And who are you?" asked the clown.

"I am Brahmâ," answered the Turk.

The crowd increased with every moment and became excited. Some imagined that Pancho had robbed a Catholic church and others that he had murdered the woman in the gondola. Church robbery is no light offence in a Catholic country, and a murderer finds little sympathy before he has been condemned by law. Soon imprecations and curses were heard and the crowd began to assume a threatening attitude; policemen, anxious to pocket the promised reward, hurried on the scene, and in less time than it would take to describe it, Pancho found himself locked in a prison, while the gipsy queen was carried home.

CHAPTER XVI.

ESCAPED.

THE cell in which Pancho was locked up was by no means so disagreeable as those which he had seen in the palace of the Doge, which in former times were used by the holy Inquisition for the purpose of silencing obtrusive critics. Those who have seen the latter know that they consisted of kennels, unfit even to serve as habitations for dogs. He who entered therein a prisoner was never to see the sunlight again, nor the human face divine, not even that of the executioner who dispatched him to a presumably better world, and whose block awaited him a few steps from the prison door. Pancho's cell was big enough for a person to stand upright, and wide enough to allow moving about ; nevertheless it was not so agreeable as to make a long stay therein eminently desirable. There was a small grated window with iron bars near the top of the wall, but it had a wooden box on the outside, so as to make it impossible to see anything beyond, except a small part of the sky.

The day being a general holiday, no commissary of police nor even a lawyer could be found, and Pancho had to resign himself to the unavoidable necessity of remaining all night in that den. He did, however, not worry about it, for he was in a condition of mind that required solitude and rest, only he

wanted to know about Conchita's condition. Was she dead, or had she recovered? Did her memory return, or did she still imagine herself to be Juana? He cursed his own curiosity, which had been once more the cause of his misfortune, as it had been when he left San Francisco for the foolish purpose of seeking self-knowledge in Africa.

Slowly the day wore on. From the outside could be heard the sounds of the orchestra that played on the Rialto, and the shouts of the crowd; from time to time a flash of light at the window, followed by a crack, indicated that a rocket had burst in the sky. For a long time he paced his cell, but at last his excitement gave way to fatigue and he fell asleep.

There is a popular superstition among scientists and rationalistic philosophers, according to which dreams are the results of bodily sensations and mental impressions received during the day; but "there are dreams and dreams." There are the vagaries of fancy impressing the half-conscious brain before it has again resumed its regular occupation; there are the semi-conscious states in which the mind sees its own images thrown more or less into confusion, at a time when the light of reason has not yet returned from the interior sanctuary, and assumed its rule over the intellectual functions of the speculating mind. The latter then resemble a school of small boys frolicking and amusing themselves at their own sweet will, while the teacher is absent. But there are also prophetic dreams, during which the soul may behold, as in a mirror, things of which the arguing intellect, reasoning from the material plane, can form no conception. During such moments the mind draws nearer to the divine spirit in its own centre, receiving its light and its teachings. There, in the centre, where rests the "golden egg" in which is contained all wisdom, no past and no future exists, but all things are eternally present. The soul being in closer contact with the divine spirit may then, by means of such dreams, bring the knowledge of the spirit to the eternal consciousness of the mind.

A Vision.

Such a "dream" perhaps it was, which Pancho dreamed that night in his prison at Venice. He saw himself floating in that rosy light which he had seen around the head of the Talking Image. He was surrounded and penetrated by it, immersed in an ethereal realm of infinite bliss. He was Pancho no more; he neither knew nor cared to know who that personality called "Pancho" was, he only knew that he existed as an individual and self-conscious being, and yet as an integral part of the infinite All. It seemed to him that he was like a globe of living light; self-luminous, and nevertheless reflecting a part of a far greater light, coming from some interior centre. Far below him in space was an inferior planet, which he recognized as being the earth, and upon its surface he saw an apparently formless mass, squirming with life. As he drew nearer, he saw that this formless mass resolved itself into a vast multitude of ever-changing individual forms of human beings, and that an almost imperceptibly small portion of that rosy light penetrated each individual form, and caused a few individuals to radiate as if endowed with the glory surrounding the head of a saint. There were comparatively few men and women who knew about the existence of that rosy light, or who paid any attention to its presence; they were too much engaged in running after various shadows which they mistook for realities. Some were running after fortune, some after fame, some were led on by a shadow called "ambition," others were mocked by an illusion called "love," but which seen from that height could easily be recognized as being merely an inverted image caused by the reflection of a ray of true spiritual love. Many were imagining that they saw spirits and trying to catch them, but these spirits were only the creations of their brains and had no substance, while none seemed to know the true Spirit in whom all real powers are contained. All these people, among whom he at last also recog-

nized his own image and that of others whom he knew, could not see real truth, love, justice, beauty, and harmony; but they had invented artificial things which they called by such names, and which presented many curious fantastic shapes. This squirming mass of humanity continually changed its form, being born, living, dying, to be born, to live and to die again, while the rosy light for ever remained.

As his attention became attracted towards that rosy light, he found that the light itself was the Life, filling each living form with life, and being itself filled with living and ethereal forms of great beauty. These forms were of human shapes and of a god-like aspect, looking as if they were the concentrated essence of love and intelligence, and some of them had their own images reflected in the surging mass of humanity below, just as the light of a star may be reflected in a pool of water upon the earth. But in these cases the images assumed living shapes, looking like the rest of humanity.

As he espied his own personality among that scrambling mass of mortals, he was grieved to see its many imperfections, and how utterly incapable it appeared of comprehending and holding the light of the spirit. He now fully realized the insignificance of his own personality, which like that of the others was merely a passing shadow, a hallucination, produced by that nightmare called "terrestrial life," which is itself the outcome of ignorance. As he conceived of being one with that personality called "Pancho" a feeling of sorrow came over him, which attracted him to that form. He struggled to free himself from this fatal attraction, but he was irresistibly drawn in an earthward direction, for his time of liberation had not yet come. A moment of unconsciousness followed, and then Pancho "awoke."

Pancho "awoke," that is to say his terrestrial personality began again to dream the dream called "life," while the perceptive faculties of his soul entered into a semi-conscious condition and his spiritual vision became dimmed, but he

remembered enough of that glorious vision to realize the immense superiority of a life in the spirit, over the earth-dream of life. He longed to be for ever united to that glorious being, his own higher Ego, which had obtained freedom from the bonds of matter and was existing in the realm of eternal truth.

It was early in the morning, but soon the jailor made his appearance, and Pancho gave him orders for breakfast, asking him at the same time to inquire about Mrs. Smith. Breakfast came, but no news from Conchita, and moreover he was informed that this was a holy day on which no official business could be transacted, and that all that could be done was to wait until after the holy days were over, when the commissary would attend to his case.

"And how long will these cursed holy days last?" asked Pancho.

"Church-robbers," answered the jailor, "have no respect for holy days, though other people have. Let me see. Yesterday was Shrove Tuesday, to-day is Ash Wednesday, to-morrow will be the feast of Saint Thomas, and on Friday that of San Giovanni. Saturday is too late in the week to begin anything, and no business can be done on Sunday, but it may be that next Monday the commissary will come. You will therefore have ample time to consult a lawyer to prepare your defence, if there is any. Lawyers are usually not very strict Christians, and I think Mr. Caramucho, the criminal pleader, will be here to-morrow, if you wish to see him.

Pancho expressed his willingness to see Caramucho, and on the following day a little man, wearing a black moustache and gold spectacles, entered the cell.

Pancho told his story, and the lawyer shook his head.

"It is a sad case," said Caramucho, "the assuming of a false name is the most serious point against you. The best thing for you to do, will be to say nothing at all about Pancho, and to remain Krasi-Basi. Mr. Brahm says that Krasi-Basi is the

legal owner of the Talking Image, and if you are Krasi-Basi, you have merely carried away your own property, to which you had a legal right. By the way, how much is the statue worth ?”

“Confound the statue ! It is worth nothing to me,” answered Pancho, somewhat irritated at being still looked upon as a thief. “It is merely a curiosity because it can speak.”

The lawyer incredulously shook his head. “That makes the case still worse,” he said. “If the statue can speak, it must be a living person, and you will be indicted for murder or abduction if it is not of age. You will have to remain in prison until the authorities at the Cape are notified, when they will either send Captain Bumpkins to identify you, or request your extradition according to Para. 1,329, Article 3,566 of the penal code.

“But I did not take the statue away,” remonstrated Pancho.

“That remains to be proved,” said the lawyer. “If you bring a hundred witnesses to swear that they did not see you take it away, their testimony will go for nothing against the evidence of one witness who swears that he believes you took it. Circumstantial evidence goes a long way. You have been at Urur. You have been seen prowling about the temple, the Image disappeared and you left soon afterwards. There is enough evidence to convince a jury of average intelligence that you are guilty, and to hang you on the spot. I am your attorney, and you had better tell me the truth so that I can see my way clear. In this way I may perhaps save you a few years of hard labour in the penitentiary.”

“It is all pure and unadulterated nonsense,” replied Pancho. “The Image was a very extraordinary thing ; it had its own will, and nobody could have taken it away if it had not wanted to go. It was a production of Magic, and had magic powers. I should not be surprised if it were suddenly to appear in court to testify in my favour.”

"That would help you nothing," said Caramucho. "Its evidence would not be admitted. Our law-makers were too much enlightened to believe in magic and sorcery, our penal code does not admit supernatural things. It is known that statues cannot speak, and therefore they are not permitted to testify. Nothing that would go to prove the existence of occult phenomena is ever admitted as evidence. If a ghost were to appear upon the witness stand, he would be immediately fined for contempt of court."

"But would not the judge believe his own senses, if something extraordinary were to happen in court?" asked Pancho.

"Nothing extraordinary is permitted to happen in court," said the lawyer, "and if any witness testifies to having seen such things he is immediately put down as a lunatic. The only way in such a case for a witness to save himself from being sent to the insane asylum, is to declare that he has been cheated by some trickster."

"It is a queer state of things," said Pancho, "if one has to lie to save one's self from injustice in a court of justice."

Caramucho shrugged his shoulders and walked away.

We will not ask the reader to follow Pancho in his meditations; it may be sufficient to say, that to him it seemed more than ever that the whole world was one great and ludicrous masquerade, in which the truth is neither desired nor understood. He saw himself engulfed in a mass of hallucinations and conflicts arising from the most profound ignorance existing in all departments of human life, and he asked himself whether it would not be better to make an end to the farce, and to step out of a life in which there was no truth, and which seemed to have no object. But who assured him, if he were to make an end to it by his own hands, that he would find the truth after all? If knowledge of spiritual things is attainable without the possession of a physical form, why then are men born at all? Perhaps if they step out prematurely before they have gained the experience which they need, they

may have to be born again to acquire it, and perhaps under less favourable conditions than they are enjoying at present? He remembered having read, that if one steps out of the world, he steps into that of which the world is made and becomes himself a part of the *chaos*, and engulfed in darkness. He felt convinced that terrestrial life is necessary for the purpose of obtaining the true spiritual light necessary to continue a conscious existence after the death of the body. In reviewing his past life he saw how unreasonably he had acted in the past, because he had no self-knowledge, but allowed himself to be misled by appearances and by adopting the opinions of other people in the place of perceiving the truth. He realized that it would have been far better for him if he had always listened to the voice of conscience that speaks within the heart, instead of following the vagaries created by the imagination. In the voice of conscience he now recognized the "invisible guide" of whom he had read in the *Book of Mysteries*, and he made up his mind henceforth under all circumstances to follow that guide and always cling to the truth. To begin with, he resolved not to take the lawyer's advice, but to confess openly who he was. He had had enough of the fictitious Krashibashi.

On the following day, although it was still holy day, his release came in an unexpected manner. Early in the morning the commissary of police arrived, and with many apologies begged pardon for having detained Pancho so long.

"I regret it exceedingly that you have been deprived of your liberty. Just think of such a distinguished person being shut up in a prison! But it is all due to the stupidity of the police. As soon as I found out who it was that was honouring us, I immediately hastened to release you. I hope you will bear us no grudge, and consider the little unpleasantness as a Carnival joke."

"But," said Pancho, "my name is not—"

"Your name, Mr. Kratki-Bashik," interrupted the commissary, "is known all over the world as belonging to one of the most distinguished and celebrated *prestidigitateurs* and cleverest sleight-of-hand performers of this age. I have seen you myself many years ago perform at Vienna. What nice things you did! How I laughed to see you make coffee out of shavings and milk out of cotton, and steaming hot they were! And how you fell down and smashed that stove-pipe hat which you had borrowed from a gentleman and then you apologized to him and cut the hat to pieces and made it whole again. I am sure that gentleman was your confederate. How?"

"But you are mistaken," said Pancho, "I never—"

"No," said the commissary, interrupting a sentence, "of course you did not make the coffee out of the shavings, but it looked so natural. By the bye, you must have played it hard upon those Africans with your 'Talking Image.' What a hoax! Just think of it, that man Brahm went completely crazy over it! He actually swears that the statue could speak! He is raving about it, and has had to be sent to the insane asylum. I know how the trick is done. I have seen you cut off the head of a man, and the head talked while it was upon the table. It's the simplest trick, if one knows how it is done; but the other trick, the one with the stove-pipe hat, is beyond my comprehension." The commissary shook with laughter. "Moreover," he continued, after the fit of laughing was over, "it has been discovered that the man's name is not 'Brahm' after all, but 'Puffer.' The case requires the strictest investigation. Just imagine the enormity of his impudence! To give a false name and try to mislead the authorities! This alone is enough to prove him either insane or a most hardened criminal. He deserves an exemplary punishment. I tell you we are not to be imposed on by such a ragamuffin. There is nothing so secret that we do not find it out. We always keep our eyes open. Only the

secret about that stove-pipe hat I have not been able to solve. I hope that you will explain it to me."

Pancho promised to do so at some future occasion; but for the present he did not consider it advisable to continue the conversation.

The commissary accompanied him to the door, still begging his pardon for the mistake, and expressing a hope that he would reveal to him the mystery of the stove-pipe hat.

Pancho went to his lodgings and immediately sent for Marietta. From her he learned that Conchita had recovered, but that on the very next day Mr. Smith had taken her away and that they both had left for parts unknown. She supposed that they had gone to Verona.

On the next day Pancho went to Verona, and hunted everywhere for a man by the name of Smith, but although there were many Smiths in the city he could not find the one Smith he wanted. He returned to Venice and with the aid of his new friend, the commissary of police, he tried for a week to find out all the Smiths in Europe.

Letters were written in every direction and numerous answers received. There was in almost every town and village some version of "Smith." The letters coming from Germany spoke of many "Smiths", Schmieds, Schmidts, but there was not the right one among them. There was none whose description fitted Mr. Hagard. Pancho at last gave up his research, nor would it have done him any good if he had hunted up all the Smiths in the world, for Mr. Hagard had taken the name of "Muggins" and instead of going to Verona, he had taken passage on the steamer that leaves at midnight for Trieste.

CHAPTER XVII.

MADAME FLORA.

Not very far from Trieste, in a valley surrounded by some spurs of the Alpine Mountains, is a semi-Italian town. The country there looks like a garden. There are fields of grain, divided off into parcels by rows of mulberry trees upon which the silkworm feeds, and swinging vines creep from tree to tree, forming natural hedges, while the neighbouring hills are covered with vineyards and olives. The valley is watered by a river of considerable size, coming from the mountains and running swiftly towards the ocean. The village itself is composed of factories, the houses are spacious and high, and instead of church steeples and spires there is a forest of tall chimneys continually sending dark volumes of smoke up to the blue Italian sky.

In the neighbourhood of that village, but still nearer to the coast, there is a solitary inn. In its vicinity there are celebrated stalactite caves, and the place on account of its beauty and salubrity of climate is considerably frequented by tourists during a certain season of the year; although the great stream of pleasure-seeking humanity does not yet run in this direction. At the time of which we are writing there were only a few guests at the place.

It was on a frosty morning in February, when a carriage

drove up to the door of the hotel, and from it alighted a coarse-looking man and an extremely pale and delicate-looking lady, who was to all appearance consumptive, and had to be assisted to descend from the coach. Immediately the housekeeper appeared, making many reverential bows.

"Do you speak English?" said the stranger.

"A leedle, mine sir!" answered the innkeeper.

"I want a room for Mrs. Muggins," said the new-comer, in whom our readers will recognize Mr. Hagard.

The strangers were taken up stairs, and soon "Mr. Muggins" left again, to take, as he said, a stroll. Conchita was fatigued and kept her room, waiting for his return; but Mr. Hagard did not return, neither on that day nor on any following one; his disappearance remained a mystery. We only know that two days after his disappearance the *Corrière de Trieste* contained the following account of

"A FEARFUL ACCIDENT."

"An accident has happened at the mills at S., which is as horrible as it is mysterious. How it occurred, or who was the person of the unfortunate victim, has not yet been discovered. It seems that yesterday at noon, while the workmen were at their dinner, terrible yells and cries of distress were heard, coming from the engine room. The engineer hastened to the place and found the floor covered with blood and shreds of clothing. The walls were bespattered with brains, and human entrails clung to the great cog-wheel; but of the human being that thus perished nothing was found except unrecognizable remnants, not enough to establish his identity.

"None of the workmen are missing, and it therefore seems that some stranger must have entered by the private door into the engine room. The place is quite dark and the floor slippery. It may be that he fell, and that his coat was caught in the wheel. If so, he must have been dragged slowly but

irresistibly into death, and this is still more probable on account of the terrible cries he uttered before he was torn to pieces. It is not explained how the unknown man could enter the place unobserved, as the engineer denies the charge of having left the door open, and one of the firemen swears that he saw that it was locked."

Thus the mystery remained unexplained. Conchita did not read newspapers. Pancho may have heard of the accident ; but what if he did ? Such things are nothing remarkable ; accidents happen often. They are talked about for an hour and forgotten the next.

Conchita remained at the inn. A pocket-book which Mr. Hagard had left contained a sufficient sum to pay her expenses for several months, and as to what had become of "Mr. Muggins" she did not care to know. She had no desire for his return ; for she never really loved him ; she was only bound to him by some mysterious power. In the pure and exhilarating air that came from the mountains, fragrant with the odour of pines, and mixing with the balmy breeze from the ocean, her health improved rapidly, and in proportion as it improved, she felt as if the clouds around her were growing thinner and pressing less heavily upon her heart. She tried to remember her past life, before she became "Mrs. Smith" ; but there was not a single clue to solve the mystery. It was as if her mind was imprisoned ; but at last the deliverance came.

Visitors to the Friaul during the spring and summer of 188— may remember having frequently seen a stranger, a pale lady, with dark hair and eyes, and invariably dressed in black, taking solitary walks along the seashore, or sitting on some prominent cliff in some secluded spot overlooking the sea. Was it the awakening of memories of olden times that attracted Conchita to the ocean shore, or is there something soothing in the rumbling of the waves that lulls the troubled waters of the

soul ! For days Conchita strolled along the coast, leaving the inn at an early hour of the morning, and returning at night ; seeking the most deserted places, and when some stranger approached, flying like a frightened roe.

Once while watching the play of the waves Conchita found a double shell consisting of two parts : one of oval shape, and out of it grew another in the form of a tulip. She knew that she had seen such shells before, and picked it up. She knew that once before, at some time in the past, she had been in a similar place where there were cliffs and rocks, seals and *barnacle* shells. She strained her will to remember, and suddenly the light broke through the clouds, the darkness disappeared, and she knew who she had been before she became Mrs. Smith. Gradually all the memories of her past life returned. She knew that she was Conchita, and that Pancho had sailed for Africa in search of the Mysterious Brotherhood. She remembered Juana and Mrs. Wells, and how she was "magnetized" by Mr. Smith, but she could not remember having married him. Then it was that for the first time since her husband's departure Conchita began to weep ; but her tears were tears of joy, full of gratitude for that power which had enabled her to find again her own former self.

What was now to be done ? Should she write to Africa or to San Francisco, or return immediately to America ? Then she remembered that the money which had been left by Mr. Smith was exhausted ; in fact, she was already in debt to the landlord. What was to be done ? Her health had returned, and she was as strong and beautiful as before. If necessary, she could do manual labour until she received letters from home. But her situation required immediate attention. Then it was that her former unbounded faith in divine Providence asserted itself, and full of confidence that something would happen to show her which way to turn, she went back to her room.

It may have been due to the direction of divine Providence or to some other inferior cause, or perhaps a mere coincidence, that just at that time a woman from Vienna happened to be at the same inn. "Miss Flora," for this was the name by which she was known, was a corpulent woman of middle age, with traces of former beauty. She was dressed in great style, and wore a profusion of jewellery. This woman was struck with Conchita's loveliness, and found an opportunity to make her acquaintance.

"I just dropped in," she said, as she entered Conchita's room, "to have a short conversation with you. You must be very lonely in this dreadful place. I actually do not know what to do with myself."

"I am not lonely," answered Conchita. "I love to be alone with myself."

"Not I," said Miss Flora. "If I have no other company but myself, it seems to me as if I were in company with nothing. I must have something to stimulate me, to make me know that I live."

"What induced you to come?"

"Well!" answered the stranger. "You see, I had the historics, I therefore insulted my doctor, and he ordered me to take an exchange of air. 'Miss Flora,' he said, 'it is getting cold, and if you remain here you may catch a cathedralic affection of the throat, or something worse.' He is a very clever doctor. You may imagine yourself perfectly well; but he will convince you that you are sick. Not long ago he predicted to one of my girls that she would soon have an elliptic fit, and sure enough she had one the very next day. He knows better what is the matter with you than you do yourself."

"Can't he cure sick people," asked Conchita, "by making them imagine that they are well?"

"Oh!" said Miss Flora; "it's only the quacks that do such things. He is a regular doctor, and gives lots of medicine. He writes prescriptions, and we get them made up at the

hypothecary-shop. He does not make people imagine things ; he just makes them see it. Fits are real things ; they are not imaginary, especially hystorical fits. He is a specialist on fits. If he can turn a disease into hystories, he can cure it."

For several days Miss Flora remained at the inn, and gained Conchita's confidence. The latter told her about her circumstances, and that she was waiting for letters from home.

"You might as well go with me to Vienna, and wait for your letters there," said Miss Flora. "Vienna is such a nice place, and I will give you a room at my house."

"I am indebted to the landlord here," said Conchita, "and I must wait for funds before I leave."

"Oh," said Miss Flora, "do not trouble yourself about that. The landlord told me that you owe him about twenty florins. It is a mere trifle. I will pay it for you with pleasure."

Conchita was surprised at this generous offer. There was something repulsive about Miss Flora ; but was it not evident that divine Providence had sent her? Would it not be rejecting the aid of God to reject such an offer? She therefore accepted it, and said—

"You are very kind indeed ! How can I ever hope to repay you for your generosity ?"

"Don't mention it," said Miss Flora. "It is nothing. I will do all I can to make you comfortable. Of course you cannot receive company with these old black clothes of yours ; but I am going to get you a fine dress, to make you look like a lady."

"Never mind," answered Conchita. "I do not wish to receive company. If you will only let me have some small room, where I am in nobody's way and where I can remain until I hear from home, I shall be perfectly satisfied."

"Don't trouble yourself about that," said Miss Flora. "We will talk it all over by and by."

Conchita left the inn with Miss Flora, and when they went away all the occupants of the hotel from the head waiter down

to the chambermaid and the porter stood at the door, looking after Conchita and her companion.

"It is a pity!" said the porter.

The head waiter shrugged his shoulders.

The chambermaid said nothing, she only giggled.

Conchita noticed the ironical smiles and the staring looks; but she attributed them to the strange contrast which existed between her appearance and that of her companion; for while the latter was dressed as if she were going to the opera, Conchita's dress was of the plainest kind, threadbare and dilapidated.

"This contract," said Miss Flora, "will cease when we come to Vienna. I have a brand new silk dress which belonged to one of the girls and has been worn only once or twice. It will fit you exactly."

"Thanks," said Conchita, "but I would prefer plain muslin."

"No, my dear," answered Flora. "You must have the silk dress. It will make you look charming. You will have all the cavaliers of the city at your feet."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Conchita. "I do not wish to attract attention."

"Never mind," said Flora. "I will help you to overcome your timidity."

They boarded the train, which swiftly bore them through one of the most picturesque countries of the world, the beautiful Styria, while the sun was sinking behind the mountain tops and the evening glories faded away. The night which followed was dark; but while its gloom rested upon the outside world, joy reigned in the heart of Conchita. She had not the least suspicion of foul play; but saw in Miss Flora her redeemer, an instrument of the kindness of divine Providence. This lady, a stranger, had been sent to her at the very time when she was in the greatest need of help. She saw now plainly that the world was not so bad as it appeared to be, and that

love, charity and benevolence still exist among mankind. Her heart felt the deepest gratitude towards the unknown Creator who watches over even the least of His creatures. She prayed silently and fervently, and after that she took Miss Flora's hand and kissed it reverently.

It was early in the morning when they arrived in the Kaiserstadt. They took a coach and went to Miss Flora's residence, which was in the central part of the city. The noise produced by the rattling of the wheels over the stone-paved street sounded harshly in Conchita's ears and she almost wished herself back in the tranquillity of the country. For some unexplained reason a heavy weight seemed to rest upon her soul, and as the carriage stopped in the narrow alley at the place of her destination, an indescribable horror crept over her. They descended, Miss Flora opened the door and made her guest ascend three flights of stairs, where she led her into a room.

"This will be your room, my dear," she said, "and now I advise you to go to bed, so that you will look bright and refreshed this evening. You must be very tired, and as it is still early, you may have a good sleep before breakfast."

Conchita embraced Miss Flora and told her she would obey. She then undressed and went to bed; for she was very much fatigued from having travelled all night. Nevertheless she could not sleep for a long time. She lay awake and looked around the room. It was richly furnished; but showed little taste in its arrangement. The walls were ornamented with some cheap chromos representing nude females. One represented Diana coming out of the bath, another Leda with the swan, and the centre-piece was according to the inscription which it bore, a representation of how Pope Alexander used to amuse himself. Wondering about Miss Flora's singular taste, Conchita fell asleep.

She may have slept for several hours, when she was roused by a loud tap at the door.

"Who is there?" asked Conchita.

"Open the door, my dear!" called the well-known voice of Miss Flora. "Open quickly." Conchita jumped out of her bed and opened the door. Miss Flora came in, and with her a brutish-looking fellow in black clothes.

"This is the gentleman I told you about," said Miss Flora. "He is our doctor and wishes to make your acquaintance."

The doctor grinned; but Conchita, trying to hide herself behind the door, exclaimed:—"Please, Miss Flora, ask the gentleman to retire."

"He is a friend of ours," said Flora, "and will tell you lots of funny stories. I will leave you both alone; but these old clothes of yours I will take away, they are not fit for you to wear."

Before Conchita could interfere, Flora had left the room, taking the clothes with her. The doctor turned round to bow her away, when Conchita gave a desperate push at the door, which struck the doctor on his back, causing him to fall out into the hall where he went sprawling upon the ground to the great detriment of his assumed air of superiority and to the consternation of madame, who now began to call Conchita vile names.

The doctor was in a rage, finding himself thus uncere- moniously expelled, and his anger rose still higher when he found that Conchita had bolted the door. He thundered against it with his fist, clamouring for admittance; but finally went away, calling out that he would come back the next day; while Flora locked the door from the outside with the key.

For a while Conchita wept bitterly. She attempted to open the door, but it was locked. She then knew that she was a prisoner in a house of ill-fame.

Now she began fully to realize the horror of her condition. She was entirely in the power of the woman whose aid she had accepted. There were no means of escape, and even if all

the doors had been left open she could not have gone out into the street without clothes.

Hour after hour passed away, and Conchita could do nothing but weep. The room was chilly, she shivered, and was forced to return to bed to protect herself against the cold. At last the key was turned, the door opened, and a girl entered, carrying a tray with breakfast.

"Madame," she said, "thought that perhaps you would not be ready to come to the dining-room and prefer to have breakfast here."

"Please tell Miss Flora," replied Conchita, "that I do not want breakfast, but I want her to return to me my clothes. I want to leave this house immediately."

"It is of no use to ask her such a thing," said the girl, "for she would not consent. She will not let you go. Just stay here and behave yourself quietly. It is of no use to make a fuss. By and by you will like the place well enough."

"Surely," said Conchita, "Miss Flora would not dare to keep me here against my will, if I do not want to remain."

"Oh, you do not know her," said the girl. "Moreover, madame says that you owe her a considerable sum of money which she paid for you at a hotel, besides your railway fare. You could not leave the house before you have paid the debt."

"Oh, the villainous woman!" exclaimed Conchita. "She did not make any conditions like that when she asked me to come with her to Vienna."

"You must be very green," said the girl; "but why do you not wish to stay? Our business is like all others. I can see nothing disgraceful in it."

"Shame!" exclaimed Conchita. "Can you see nothing disgraceful in allowing yourself to be made a tool for the gratification of the beastly instincts of men?"

Upon hearing these words the girl opened wide her large blue eyes and looked astonished. "Why," she asked, "should

it be disgraceful to serve for the gratification of the brutal instincts of man? Is not woman the servant of man, and do not all women, except those that are independent and free, gain their livelihood by dancing attendance on man? Some cook and wash his clothes for him, others try to amuse him in various ways; some make a living by gratifying his animal appetites for food and drink; we make a living by attending to his brutal instincts. It is all merely a question of bread. We are fulfilling our destiny in attending to the duties that have been imposed upon us by our conditions. He who thinks to disgrace us is merely disgracing himself."

While pronouncing these words a change had come over the girl. She appeared to be a different person; it was as if a strange spirit was speaking out of her.

"Is it not," she continued, "the object of all women to please and be attractive to man? Does not woman look upon man as her supporter and redeemer from physical ills? Is not marriage her aim in life, and must she not first of all be pleasing to man, so as to get the best of her competitors in catching a husband? Man is attracted to woman especially by her beauty of form. Not that man does not estimate womanly virtue; but being an animal, his greatest attraction is in his animal nature. I never heard of a man coming to the desperate conclusion that he could not live without a certain woman on account of her virtue, purity, or saintliness. If you wish to reform woman, you will have to begin with man and bring him out of his semi-animal state to a higher conception of the dignity of his nature. Make him by gentle means, such as are only in the possession of woman, rise out of the depth of his degradation, and in rising upward he will raise woman with him. Let woman cease to clamour for becoming the equal of man on the animal plane and be satisfied to remain spiritually his superior. Then will woman remain the redeemer of man and be redeemed by him."

As if awaking from sleep the girl rubbed her eyes and

looked surprised. Then she said, "Excuse me, I do not know what is the matter with me. It seems to me that I have been talking nonsense. I have sometimes such curious spells. But now I must return to madame, she is waiting for me."

"Please," said Conchita, "ask her to come; I want to talk with her."

"Madame says," replied the girl, "that she will not talk with you as long as you are excited. It might make you sick."

"Never fear," answered Conchita. "I will not be excited. I will beg her to give me my clothes and I will find means to pay her."

"Madame is very angry with you, because you offended the doctor. You know he is the master in the house, and everybody has to obey him. If we do not do as he pleases, he will report us to the police."

"For heaven's sake!" exclaimed Conchita, "let him report me to the police. Surely they would take me away from here."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the girl, and went out of the room holding her sides.

As she descended the stairs, Conchita still heard her laughter ringing through the hall; but Magda—for that was her name—went to the dining-room to tell the other inmates all about that foolish stranger who imagined that the police would protect a woman after she had entered a house of ill-fame, and they all had a good jolly time, laughing at Conchita's expense.

The afternoon passed away, and Conchita had no other company but her thoughts; but towards evening Miss Flora entered the chamber, holding in her hand a rose-coloured silk dress.

"There, my dear," she said, "I have brought you that nice dress, in which you will look more respectable than in your old rags."

"Oh, Miss Flora!" said Conchita, "please give me back my old rags. I wish to leave your house. I will get some employment. I will pay you ten times more than what you paid for me."

"Fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Miss Flora. "Don't be foolish. How could you get a situation? What work could such a dainty thing as you do? Moreover, where are your papers? How can you prove that you are Mrs. Smith?"

"But my name is not Mrs. Smith," exclaimed Conchita.

"Worse and worse!" cried Miss Flora. "You have made yourself liable to two months' incarceration for having reported a false name to the police. Where is your husband?"

"I do not know," said Conchita. "Probably somewhere in Africa."

"A nice kind of a husband you have!" said Miss Flora. "To have a husband in Africa, is just like not having any husband at all. But I do not believe a word of your story. Come now and do not be so ungrateful. Put on this nice dress, come down stairs, and be sociable. We are going to have a dancing-party to-night. There will be some nice people; a count and two barons and others who are of no account, but who have plenty of money, and I want you to be civilized to them."

"No, no!" begged Conchita. "Please give me back my clothes and let me go!" So saying she threw herself at Flora's feet, and began to weep.

"You are a little blockhead!" said Miss Flora, "and very ungrateful. You will have to remain and do as I tell you. Your old rags were not fit to be worn at Vienna, they would be a disgrace to my house. I have burned them up."

When Conchita heard these words she became very indignant, and her former pride reasserted itself. Rising to her feet, she scornfully looked in Flora's eyes and said:—"Villainous wretch! How dare you burn up my clothes without my consent?"

"You need not make any fuss," replied the woman. "There

is a dress that is worth a great deal more than your rags. You may put it on or let it alone, just as you please ; but you will not leave this house until you have paid what you owe me, and if you wish anything to eat, you will have to come down to the dining-room and be polite. I am not going to send you any more meals up stairs."

So saying Miss Flora went out and slammed the door ; but she did not lock it. Conchita was left alone.

The evening wore on, and Conchita thought over her present condition, comparing it with her past life. She had always believed in a God ; but how had her implicit trust in divine Providence served her ? She had always followed the impulses of her heart ; and to what did it lead ? Her belief that God or some other person would do for her that which she ought to have done for herself, had landed her in a house of prostitution. She therefore resolved henceforth not to trust to any external aid ; but to take hold with her own hands of the helm and steer the ship of her life.

It had grown dark. Conchita put on the dress which Miss Flora had left ; she had no other choice. It was a ball dress cut low, without sleeves, but with laces and trimmings. Cautiously she opened the door and peeped into the hall. A flood of light came from the lower floor. This was not an appropriate time to attempt an escape. She closed the door and waited again until late in the night. Then she tried again. She stepped into the hall and heard the sound of a piano and the patter of dancing feet. She cautiously descended the stairs to the second flat and found herself in another hall from which a door led into the room where they were dancing. If she could only pass that door unobserved, she might reach the stairs that led to the first floor and be safe. Gathering all her courage she made a rush forward ; but at the same moment the door was opened and a man appeared upon the threshold. Seeing Conchita, he threw his arms around her and dragged her into the room. A moment afterwards she found herself

in the midst of a crowd of half drunken men and women ; they all looked up in surprise and the dance stopped.

"Madame Flora," exclaimed the man, as he held on to Conchita, "why have you been hiding away this girl? She is the jewel of your harem!"

"The jewel is not yet polished enough to be sold," answered Flora. "She is a wild cat; she has to be tamed. She will make a lovely pet if we can teach her good manners."

"Ho, ho!" laughed the man. "We will begin the lessons right away;" and addressing the musician, he called out—"Go ahead with your valse!"

"Let me go!" hissed Conchita; but the music began again and she was pulled around the room a few times. Her movements excited great laughter. The men and women crowded around her; for it was to them an unusual sight to see a woman dance against her will. Some people who were drinking brandy at a side-table rose to their feet to see the fun, and inadvertently overturned the table. Bottles and glasses fell to the floor, and the brandy was spilled over Conchita's dress.

This created a moment of confusion. Conchita's partner stopped and turned round to see what was the matter, loosening his hold of Conchita's arms. This gave her a chance to tear herself from his grasp and to run out of the room. She was immediately followed by the crowd. She flew towards the stairs that led to the lower floor, and was about to descend when she saw some men coming up. They evidently wanted to stop her; for one of them spread out his arms to prevent her passing. At that moment she perceived an open window at the head of the stairs, and, with the agility of a tigress, she jumped upon the sill, and threw herself out of the window. When the inmates of the house descended the stairs and emerged into the street, they found the bleeding body of Conchita upon the pavement.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NEW DISCOVERIES.

WE must now ask the reader to return with us about ten months in time and look after Pancho whom we have left at Venice in search of Mr. Smith.

Having become convinced of the futility of his attempts to find Conchita, and having cursed his curiosity to his heart's content, he retired once more within his own soul, trying to find the truth within himself, and the more he succeeded in collecting his thoughts within that interior chamber, the more did he become convinced that man has within himself an infallible interior guide, an unknown and invisible "Master" and Mysterious Brother such as had been described in the *Book of Mysteries*. He also found that if one pays strict attention to the admonitions of that guide, his voice, which at first is only heard like a faint whisper, may develop into a source of positive knowledge, and his light, which is at first seen only like a distant star, will at last be seen like a sun illuminating the dark chambers of the mind. Having become convinced of the futility of all efforts of finding self knowledge in external things, he made up his mind to seek for the light within his own self, mindful of the doctrine which teaches that "*Within yourself salvation must be found,*" and according to which every one must seek to develop himself

spiritually. It seemed to him that man can be taught spiritual things only by a teacher who is a spirit, and that no spirit is nearer to man than the Divine Spirit whose temple is man, and who has His sanctuary within the centre of one's own inner self, but whose presence cannot be demonstrated to the sceptical reasoner, nor be perceived by those who live within the dark clouds of matter and whose judgment is perverted by doubt and denial.

He now began to take lessons in "practical occultism," that is to say, he tried to habituate himself to recognize the true value of all things and not to put any higher estimate upon a thing than that which it actually deserves. This he found to be a most difficult undertaking, because the earthly parts of the soul of man have their roots in the realm of matter and cause him to cling to that which is earthly and sensual. There are a thousand invisible strings by which the world of sense attracts the soul that wishes to rise above it, and the wings which carry the consciousness into the higher regions of thought are at first easily fatigued. But Pancho's strength increased by his daily practical exercises, and at last he found within himself that magic power, the "Will", by which he could lift one of the curtains that hide the interior world, although there were still many more curtains to be lifted for him—not by the hands of another—but by his own. He then found, as his interior perceptive power increased, that the interior world is just as real to the inner senses as the external world is real to the outward perceptions, that the outer as well as the inner world were both the products of the Spirit who was their creator, and that the former contained forms of great beauty, which were of a more permanent character than those of the latter.

He saw that thoughts are substantial things, rendered objective to the mental perception by the power of the will, and that they are just as "material" on the plane on which they exist, as trees and rocks are "material" on the external

plane. He found that everybody who had the power to call a picture up in his mind was actually exercising a magic power, by which a thought becomes objective to the mind, a thing which by a more developed will may be impressed, even at a distance, upon the mind of another who is receptive to thought.

All these things, which are so absurdly simple, that it is almost ridiculous to mention them, and which might be known to all men, if their minds were not thrown into confusion by the complicated vagaries of metaphysical speculators, Pancho learned, not because he had some scientific authority to inform him about it, but because he acquired the power to perceive what was taking place in his own mind. He looked within himself, and thought his own thoughts instead of thinking the thoughts of another person, and he perceived that the universe is an instrument full of divine harmony, which, however, can only be realized by him who is himself of a harmonious mind. He saw that every form in the world of matter and mind is, so to say, a string upon that instrument, constituting for itself a compound instrument that ought to sound in unison with the whole. He saw how vibrations of thought started in one place, produced corresponding vibrations in similarly attuned instruments in other parts of the world, and it became clear to him that a spiritual thought of great power, emanating from one person, may affect and be expressed by not only one, but a thousand Talking Images in different parts of the world, even if the forms from which these thoughts emanate and the forms which receive them are separated by thousands of miles. For, in the realm of mind, there are not the same material obstacles as in the world of matter, and the vibrations of thought impelled by will may travel like the vibrations of the light of the rising sun.

It seems that as physical man has his relationships in the sensual world, and sympathizing friends and relatives to whom he is especially attracted, so likewise there are relationships between harmoniously attuned souls, and affinities existing between

similarly constituted minds. Thus mutually harmonious minds may communicate with each other while the physical bodies of such persons are resting in sleep; provided that the soul has become sufficiently self-conscious to realize its own existence during the sleep of the physical form. Cases are known in which persons have visited in their dreams strange places, and communicated with other persons whom they had never seen, and that they afterwards while awake met with such places and persons on the external plane.

Who knows to what part of the universe his soul may be attracted, and with what beings it may be in communication, while his terrestrial form rests in unconscious sleep? If, after awakening, he has no distinct recollection of the nature of his inner experiences during the sleep of the body, this does not prove that no such experiences took place. It merely proves that the external activity of the soul was at rest, and that the mind received no material impressions to register by means of the material brain; but occasionally it may happen that the external and internal states of consciousness are blended together, and then the nature of our inner experiences may come to the external understanding of the mind.

We will not try the patience of the reader by recording the various visions which Pancho experienced in his inner consciousness, visions which grew more and more vivid and real as he succeeded in withdrawing his attention and desires from the external world. But we will state that there often appeared to him in such "dreams" a stranger of noble aspect, a man whom he had never seen, dressed in white garments, and wearing upon his breast a golden cross; but whenever he made an effort to speak with that person, his external consciousness returned and the vision disappeared. Whether or not his soul was in communication with him when his body was fully asleep, Pancho could not say, because on awakening he had no recollection of it. Only once he remembered of having dreamed that he went with that man to a room filled with

many curious things, with scientific instruments, bottles and books, from which he concluded that this man was an Alchemist. He could plainly remember the room. There were some curious pictures hanging around the walls; one especially was very remarkable. It was a masterpiece of some artist, and dark from age. It represented the battle of the Archangel Michael with the dragon of selfishness. As this story proceeds, we shall see that this dream was not a product of fancy; but at present it is our duty to call attention to another line of events.

There is no doubt in our mind, that some of our readers have become interested in the fate of Mr. Puffer, whose career towards adeptship was sadly interrupted by his incarceration in a lunatic asylum. Pancho likewise felt sympathy for the man, and after some delay and trouble, he finally obtained permission to visit him in the place where he was confined under observation by medical men.

The asylum was quite interesting. There were some curious cases among the patients. There was, for instance, an eloquent preacher, who was in the habit of going out at night upon the graveyard and preaching sermons to the corpses, although the corpses could not understand what he said. Another patient imagined himself to be dead, while all the time he enjoyed a good appetite, but would not rise from the coffin in which he had made his bed; another, who had been a philosopher, talked incessantly in a learned manner about things of which he knew absolutely nothing, and there were a number of people who wanted to reform the world without even being able to reform themselves. In fact the inhabitants of that asylum looked very much like the inhabitants of the world outside; the difference between the insanity of the former and that of the latter being only a difference in the degree in which the disease manifested itself.

Dr. Sellerio, the medical director of the asylum, cordially received Pancho and heard his request.

"There is no doubt," he said, "that Mr. Puffer, or as he calls himself, 'Mr. Brahm,' is completely insane. Fortunately his insanity seems to be of a harmless character, and we may be able to send him back to his friends. The poor man's brain has been entirely deranged, and its forces brought out of equilibrium by the reading of books on magnetism and theosophy. It is a shame that in this enlightened age any apparently sane person should believe in such nonsense, and that otherwise intelligent people countenance occultism instead of frowning it down. I deeply regret that the authorities of the state and the Church are not able or willing to suppress all kinds of occult literature."

"It is indeed very unfortunate," answered Pancho, "that many of these books contain a great deal of rubbish, and are written by people who do not perceive the truth, but merely enter into speculations about it; while theorizing and speculating about things of which one has no practical experience is very likely to disorder the imagination and to derange the mind."

"There is only one rational spot left in Mr. Puffer," continued the director, "namely, that he agrees that there is no soul. He imagines himself to be the god of the universe; but he is reasonable enough not to believe in a soul."

"Do you then not believe yourself in a soul?" asked Pancho.

"I am a scientist," answered Sellerio, "and science is proud of knowing nothing about such things. If a soul did exist, we should know it. Who ever saw a soul? Of what is it composed? Where does it live? I tell you, there is no such thing as a soul!"

"Nevertheless," said Pancho, "I have seen testimonials in the possession of Captain Bumpkins, written by Lord Fitznoodle and Lady Partington, who certify that the soul exists."

"These people were all deluded," replied the director. "All anatomical, physiological, and pathological researches

have failed to lead to the discovery of a soul, either in the pineal gland or anywhere else. Such a belief is a superstition, which, like the belief in ghosts and spirits, belongs to the dark ages, and has fortunately been abandoned by all recognized authorities. A belief in the soul is sufficient to stamp him who is convicted of it as extremely ignorant, if not downright insane."

"By the term 'soul,'" explained Pancho, "I refer to the power of the immortal divine spirit in man."

"Who ever heard of an immortal divine spirit in man?" exclaimed Sellerio. "When man dies, there is an end of it. When the galvanic action that produces life and thought ceases, there is an end of what the visionaries call 'spirit.' I do not believe in spirits. Nobody believes in spirits except dreamers and cranks. I am a scientist. I want facts, sir, facts! I want facts such as I can see and handle. I have not yet seen anything divine in my laboratory."

"How do you classify a belief in Divinity?" asked Pancho.

"Emotional insanity," at once replied the director. "Sometimes it is spontaneous, at other times it seems to be inherited, sporadic or epidemic. Occasionally we find it associated with hallucination of sight and hearing; frequently it is the result of an abnormal development of the occipital portion of the brain."

"There seem to be many people affected with it;" said Pancho.

"Fortunately for science," answered Sellerio, "there is an abundance of pathological material for the study of such cases; nor would it be well to cure them. A belief in a superior power is a form of insanity which has to be tolerated at present, because it serves to keep up order in the state and the Church. When all men have become thoroughly scientific, such a superstition will be unnecessary."

"Then you consider all kinds of idealism as emotional insanity?" asked Pancho.

"Most assuredly I do," said the director, "and the quickest way to cure it is a good dose of ipecac."

They went to Mr. Puffer's cell, and found him sitting cross-legged in Oriental fashion upon the table.

"How do you do, Mr. Puffer?" said Pancho.

"Don't call me Puffer," said the patient; "I am Brahm. Puffer's merely the name of that illusive and evanescent personality which I have created for the purpose of manifesting myself. This personality has now attained the four states of knowledge and needs no more books. First, it has arrived at the conviction that it knows everything that can possibly be known. Secondly, it believes that there is nothing more to learn. Thirdly, it sees that all impediments to its knowing everything have been destroyed. And fourthly, that it is now in possession of perfect knowledge."

"Then," said Pancho, "if you know everything, please tell me what has become of the Talking Image, and where is my wife?"

"Alas!" answered the unfortunate man, "I know it very well, but I cannot make my personality understand it."

"Then it seems," said Pancho, "that your personality has not yet attained the full knowledge of being Brahm, and that you are Brahm merely in your imagination."

"In my capacity as Brahm," said the patient, "I do not care a straw for that personality which they call Mr. Puffer, and do not want to have anything to do with it. In fact, I now know that this man 'Puffer' is a great simpleton, but it would be advantageous for him if you could get him out of this place."

Pancho promised to attend to it.

"We would not keep you here," said Sellerio, addressing Mr. Puffer, "if you would speak rationally, instead of imagining yourself to be all sorts of things."

"Brahm is nothing," solemnly replied Mr. Puffer.

"Just listen to him," exclaimed Sellerio. "First he says

that he is Brahm, and then he says Brahm is nothing. How can we let a man loose upon the community if he talks such arrant nonsense?"

"He means to say," explained Pancho, "that Brahm is not a thing, but that universal principle from which originates the power that produces all things in the universe. It is often very difficult to express such ideas correctly, while an incorrect expression always gives rise to very serious misunderstandings."

Then Mr. Puffer lifted his hand, and solemnly spake the following words:—

"Everything is nothing, and nothing is everything. I am Brahm and Brahm is nothing. I am the All; but the All does not exist. I am Brahm who have created that illusion called the world for the purpose of deluding mankind. There are no bodies; that which is called a body is merely an appearance; there is no soul; for the power of the body perishes at the time of its death. What is called the soul is nothing but the active force or attraction in man, which, when he dies, must die with him. All nature is created out of myself, and I am nothing; but out of nothing nothing can be produced. Nirwana is nothingness, and it requires a pure soul of nothingness to live in it."

"I think," said the director, addressing Pancho, "it is now time to administer our ipecac."

Pancho and Sellerio left, while Mr. Puffer was still talking and expounding his theories.

"He is decidedly getting worse," said the director. "He begins to talk about a soul living in nothingness."

"I am sorry for him," said Pancho. "He was a very amusing fellow."

Pancho left the asylum and went to his room. There, sitting down at his table, he took up a sheet of paper and began to write a letter to Sellerio, explaining his views about Mr. Puffer; but he soon discontinued it, and leaving the un-

finished letter upon the table he threw himself upon a lounge, thinking which one of the two was more insane, Mr. Puffer or Dr. Sellerio. They were both deluded. The former revelled in his imagination, the latter was rooted firmly in his own ignorance; both clung to the opinions which they had formed, not on the basis of direct perception of internal truths, but from external observation and the reading of books. Each imagined that he knew, while neither had real knowledge.

"Perhaps," he thought, "the rationalist and the idealist are both right in their views about immortality; each one according to his own standpoint. The animalist identifies himself with his animal nature, which is mortal, and he can therefore find nothing immortal in it. The idealist seeks to rid himself of that which is mortal in his nature, and having found the immortal ideal within himself, he identifies himself with it and becomes immortal."

"External observation," said Pancho to himself, "does not reveal internal truths; logic may err, even mathematics convey no real knowledge, they show merely what the things calculated about cannot be; but do not enable us to perceive what they actually are. Real knowledge results only from direct perception and understanding. Books are useful and necessary adjuncts for those who wish to attain real knowledge, and who have not the power to perceive internal truths; but to those who have attained the power to see the truth as it is, books describing what others believed about it are as useless as crutches to a sound person able to walk without them."

While meditating upon such subjects, he entered into the interior condition, and his external consciousness faded away, while that of his soul was fully alive. Suddenly he saw himself surrounded by a bright and rosy light, similar to that which he had seen at the time of his interview with the Image, and the stranger whom he had seen before in his dreams.

stood before his interior vision and spoke the following words :—

“The Talking Image is in imminent danger. The vultures of destruction are assembling around it, devising to tear it to pieces to find out the cause of its divine inspiration, and the power that enables it to speak. Unless it is saved from the dissection by which it is threatened, the instrument which the sages have prepared to give superior information to this sinful world and to lead mankind up to a higher region of thought, will be destroyed. If you wish to save it, hasten to its relief.”

The apparition then faded away and Pancho “awoke,” doubting whether or not this vision had been the product of his own imagination. Where was the Image, and if it was in danger, where should he go to save it?

He arose, and his glance fell upon the unfinished letter upon the table, and there, upon the space not written over by him, he saw a strange handwriting, in which were written the identical words spoken to him by the stranger, and moreover the address of the present owner of the Image was added, which proved to be that of a judge in a little Polish town near Krakau. The letter was signed by “An Agent of the Mysterious Brotherhood.”

This was surely a true “occult letter” ; at least it had been written by some occult means. We will not enter into metaphysical speculations to find some plausible theory by which might be explained how it could have been produced. We can see no possible advantage in attempting to persuade the sceptic to believe in something of which he has no knowledge and no experience. We therefore leave it to those who like to amuse themselves in this manner, to guess whether or not our account can be true, and if so, whether there may be persons that can manipulate thoughts and project their images upon material substances ; whether the ideas were first impressed upon his own brain, there formed into sentences, and then projected

upon the paper by the power of a superior will ; or whether they were alchemically precipitated by means of an Elemental ; or whether Pancho during his ecstatic condition arose and himself wrote unconsciously the letter ; whether it was done by a good or evil spirit, or by some impossible trickery. All such questions we leave to those to guess about who are inclined to pass their time in that manner. To the experienced Alchemist these things are no mystery, and he needs no instruction about it. As to Pancho, he was neither astonished nor surprised ; he knew that there is a bridge leading from the "subjective" to the "objective" realm of phenomena, and that to the untutored savage the writing of an ordinary letter is not less astonishing than the manipulating of "spiritual" substances is to those who do not know that such things exist. His own intuition told him that the contents of the letter were true, and he made up his mind to go and to save the Image from destruction by the hands of ignorant "science".

On that very evening Pancho left Venice for Vienna.

The night was dark. The train, after leaving the plains of Italy, entered into the mountain regions of the Alps, winding its way upwards in snake-like contortions, creeping up on inclined planes and through narrow gorges and valleys. Several tunnels and bridges were passed, and it approached the highest point of the mountains to descend again into the valleys.

Pancho had ample time for meditation. He thought about the uselessness of destructive science, and how these deluded scientific people are like small boys, who destroy a valuable watch to see what produces the ticking. They, in their ignorance, imagine that they can solve the mystery of sound by breaking the instrument, or discover the secret of light by smashing the lamps. Is such a proceeding more absurd than to imagine that the cause of intelligence and life can be found by dissecting the organism in which these powers become manifest ?

This train of thought led Pancho to think of the nature of

Life. He perceived that it was not a product of the forms which it inhabits, but of an universal principle which by its activity produces living forms. As the light of the sun renders objects luminous, likewise the divine principle in nature made those objects, which were adapted to such a purpose, living and conscious ; and as the light of the sun, after disappearing from the horizon, leaves some objects dark, while others have the power to retain it and remain luminous for a while, likewise the principle of life departs from the physical form at its death, but there are some elements belonging to the soul, though still of an earthly nature, that may remain for a while living and conscious even after the self-conscious spirit has departed from them.

To illustrate this truth, Pancho's interior guide opened his inner senses, and he saw himself in the spirit in the midst of a graveyard. The earth offered no obstacle to the perceptive faculty of his soul, and he could see into the habitations of those silent hermits whom the world believes all to be peaceful and dead. Then he saw that not all the tombs were entirely dark : but in many the ethereal counterparts bound to the corpse were still illuminated by a remnant of consciousness left by the departed spirit and endowing them with sensation. Many of the graves were thus illumined by the murky glow of passion and unsatisfied desires, while the entities to which these remnants belonged were tortured by evil memories, useless remorse for past misdeed, and by the evil spectres which their perverted imagination had called into existence. There were suicides that had not outlived their allotted time upon the earth, and who were still bound to their own disintegrating corpses, which made them suffer. True enough, they did not feel physical heat or cold, or suffer from the narrowness of the grave in which the corpse was confined ; they did not suffocate from want of air, but they could not breathe the free atmosphere of the heavenly spirit ; they were like persons in a dream suffering from some horrible nightmare. Their

bodies still exhibited a phosphorescent glow of some remnant of animal consciousness which caused them agonies, and thus Pancho saw that the dream, called terrestrial life, may project its horrid illusions even far beyond the portals of death to the other side of the tomb.

He was so deep in his meditations that he did not notice the stopping of the train and the entrance of a man into the coach ; but now he heard the voice of a stranger say, as if in response to his own thoughts :—

“The most fortunate thing in life is that we do not know its true nature.”

Pancho looked up, and for a moment he believed that he saw before him the identical form of that person whom he had seen in his visions ; there was the same high forehead, the dark brown hair, the Roman nose, the finely-cut mouth, and the curiously trimmed beard ; but no, it could not be the same individual seen in his dreams ; for while the latter was of an extremely refined and ethereal, if not divine aspect, the former looked coarse and material. He seemed to be a labouring man ; for his clothes were soiled, he carried an axe, and a bundle of blankets, and a travelling bag ; and Pancho immediately dismissed the idea of his being the man seen in his dreams. In fact he was somewhat annoyed by the intrusion.

“I hope that these bundles are not in your way,” said the stranger, piling them upon the seat.

“There is room enough ;” somewhat gruffly answered Pancho.

The train moved again, and for a while they rode together in silence, Pancho lighting a cigar for want of something better to occupy himself with. After a while the stranger asked :—

“Have you any whisky with you ?”

“No ;” replied Pancho, somewhat displeased with the request. “I am no friend of whisky.”

“It is sometimes very useful to have it,” said the man.

Pancho looked in disgust at the stranger. If there was

anything he despised, it was the sight of a drunkard. How was it possible that he could even for a moment mistake a whisky-drinker for the ideal of his dreams. Pancho made no reply.

After a little pause the stranger again spoke out and said :—

“Whisky on a cold night like this is good to warm the blood and keep up the spirits.”

“I should think,” answered Pancho, “that you have enough blankets to keep you warm, and that for once you could get along for a little while without whisky.”

“These blankets will presently be needed,” said the man, “as we will have to step out of this car.”

“Not I,” replied Pancho. “I am going to Vienna.”

“You will not go to Vienna by this train.”

“Are you going to prevent me?” asked Pancho sarcastically.

“No,” said the man; “but we are going to have a serious accident.”

Pancho looked up in surprise. Was he in company of a madman? What if this fellow were to take a fit and become unmanageable! Pancho made a motion to secure to himself the axe.

“This axe and these blankets,” said the stranger unconcernedly, “I took with me because I foresaw that we shall need them, and as there will be a number of people severely wounded, I wish I had brought some stimulants with me. I forgot it, being in a hurry.”

“Did you dream that we are going to have an accident?” asked Pancho.

“I did not dream it, I saw it,” answered the stranger. “Between the next station and the one after that, something is going to break, and the engine with three of the cars will tumble down over a precipice. Nothing will happen to this car. It is the fourth and will remain on the track.”

"For heaven's sake," exclaimed Pancho, "if you know all these things, why do you not stop the train and speak to the conductor?" So saying he took up the axe and was going to break with the handle the glass that covers the electric button by which a signal may be given to stop the train in cases of imminent danger."

"Just keep still," said the stranger. "What will you tell the conductor? Do you want us to be laughed at and fined for stopping the train? Although I have foreseen the accident, I cannot tell the exact nature of the cause of the danger. If you say that we are going to have an accident and you cannot give any intelligible reason for it, you will not be believed. After the accident has taken place, you will be arrested; because it will be said that if you had not something to do with its cause, you could not have known of it. Moreover, if the accident could be prevented and were not to take place, I could not have seen it happen. I can only foresee things which exist in the future and not those which are non-existent."

Pancho saw the force of this logic. He remembered a case in which a clairvoyant had correctly described the place in which some stolen money was hidden, and how after the property was recovered the seer was imprisoned for complicity in the theft, because it was said that he could not have known the hiding place if he had not assisted the thief.

"Is it then impossible," he asked, "to prevent things which are thus foreseen?"

"As impossible," answered the stranger, "as to make undone anything that has happened in the past."

"Did you see me in your vision?" asked Pancho.

"Yes," answered the stranger, "I saw you aiding me in attending to the wounded."

"Then," said Pancho, "if I were to leave the train at the next station, your vision would not have been true?"

"You will not leave it," replied the man, "for if you were to leave it, I would have foreseen it too."

"You are right ; I shall remain."

He now regarded his companion more clearly, and as he looked with the eye of the soul below the rough external appearance of the stranger, he saw that he was undoubtedly the man seen in his dreams, although the outward shell resembled the spiritual man no more than an unfinished model in clay is equal to the perfected marble statue, coming from the hands of the master artist. He then asked the man whether he remembered that they had met before in the spirit and what he knew about the Talking Image. To this the stranger replied :—

"There are many things which the soul of man may accomplish, while the body is asleep, and which we do not remember when awake. Every state of consciousness has its own modes of perception and its own tablets to record past experiences. Animal man remembers his animal experiences ; the spirit in its spiritual state remembers that which occurs when conscious of divine things. If we could raise our consciousness up to that part of our being which is immortal, we should also partake of its memory and recollect our past lives upon this and other planets. As to the Talking Image, I have heard of it, but know at present nothing of its whereabouts. It is quite a curiosity ; but in some respects not more so than other persons ; because I regard every person, who does not create his own thoughts, as being merely a talking image through which universal thought is expressed, or as a crucible in which the essences, principles and ideas existing in the world are mixed and purified, calcinated, amalgamated, sublimated and refined, until there results the true gold of spirituality, self-existent, pure and immortal."

"Do you then believe in Alchemy?" asked Pancho.

"There is no higher art," answered the stranger, "than the chemistry of Life by which the divine marriage between spirit and matter takes place. Alchemy is the knowledge of God, taught by His Holy Spirit ; the science which teaches

the way to unite the interior world with the external one. When you come to visit me at Vienna, I may be able to give you some useful hints about this divine science, and you will see that the universal spirit is actually something substantial and may be made to produce tangible things, as is in fact done every day in the alchemical laboratory of nature."

Pancho expressed himself delighted with this idea and promised to come.

"Why is it," resumed he, "that material science knows nothing about those things of the spirit?"

"Because," rejoined the stranger, "modern science can deal only with external appearances, she has no perception for the Cause of all things, and is therefore only a superficial science."

"But surely the theologians ought to know all about God, the Cause of all things?"

"They ought to, but they don't, because they likewise are misled by appearances and seek for divine knowledge in outward forms, instead of in that God who is to be born within their own souls."

The train now arrived at a station near the highest altitude of the pass. After a few minutes it began to move again, and soon the rapidity of its motion indicated that they were on the descending slope of the mountain. In the meantime a storm arose and the wind blew with such fury that it threatened to overthrow the train. Perhaps ten minutes passed away in silence, when the stranger exclaimed,

"Hold on to the cushions, sir!"

Pancho did as directed. At that moment a terrible shock occurred, which caused the carriage to shake. At the same time a crash and a rolling noise was heard, followed by cries of distress. Pancho and the stranger went out of the car and a fearful sight met their eyes. They were standing at the brink of a precipice, while below them in a gorge was

the engine, from which rushed sparks of fire and hissing steam. Three passenger coaches were lying in a heap. The rising moon threw a ghastly light over the scene.

"Let us be quick!" said the stranger. "The coals of the engine will set fire to the cars."

They descended cautiously. Already one of the coaches had begun to burn, and now Pancho saw for what purpose the stranger had brought the axe with him; for with the dexterity of an expert he cut a hole in the side of the car and extricated a woman whose body had been imprisoned between broken splinters and pieces of wood.

We will spare the readers a description of the heartrending details that followed upon this accident; some of them may have read accounts of it at the time when a train was overturned by the force of the *Bora*, whose destructive power is well known on the *Karst*. There were a few persons killed and many severely wounded.

The stranger, aided by Pancho, rendered the necessary services to the injured, and made them as comfortable as possible until such aid as could be obtained at the nearest town arrived at the place of the accident. At last another train arrived and Pancho continued his voyage. The stranger remained, but gave to Pancho his address in Vienna.

"You will easily find the place," he said, "it is an odd-looking house and there is a cross with a rose in the centre sculptured over the door."

Pancho wanted to ask some more questions; but the whistle sounded, the train began to move, and soon the place of the accident was out of sight.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONSILIUM.

THERE was another delay of two hours at the next station, where Pancho had to wait for the regular train. He made use of the time to telegraph to the owner of the Image, requesting him to have the dissection postponed. The answer came that the Image was still alive, but that the dissection could not be postponed; as to do so would cause considerable inconvenience to the medical gentlemen, whose time was very precious, and some of whom were coming from considerable distances to assist at the dissection. Cursing the benighted ignorance of the medical fraternity, Pancho resumed his voyage. He travelled all night. Early in the morning he arrived at Krakau, where he took the stage for B——, the place where Mr. Snivelinsky, the owner of the Image, resided. The sun in his glory had already risen above the horizon when Pancho arrived at the place of his destination. It was the day appointed for the dissection of the Image, and Pancho congratulated himself that he was not too late. He hurried to the house of the judge and found him in the back yard feeding his favourite hogs. The judge was dressed in a flowery morning gown and nightcap, and smoking a pipe of enormous dimensions. A joyful smile was upon his countenance as he watched his pets devouring their gruel; for

Snivelinsky was a lover of hogs. There were large and small swine, and especially one great porker of whom the judge was especially fond, and who received the largest share of his caresses.

"Just look at him," he said, after Pancho had introduced himself and stated his business. "What a fine fellow he is! I envy his appetite and his happiness. He has no cares and no troubles. We call him 'Philosopher' because he is not at all particular about what he eats. Nevertheless he always gets the best of everything. We all love him and treat him as if he were one of our own family. We feed him on the best of slops because we know that he will not be ungrateful; for next Christmas he will furnish us with just as fine sausages as his father did last year. His father was just as fine a fellow as he, and he bore a striking resemblance to him. He made us enough pickled pork to last us all winter." Here the judge smacked his lips, as in anticipation of the good things he expected from the gratitude of his porker.

Judge Snivel, or, as he was generally called, Snivelinsky, meaning "the son of Mr. Snivel, *senior*," was a lineal descendant of the Snivel family—or, as they were called in some ancient documents, the Sneevels, although the correct orthography of the name is still a matter of dispute among the learned, and in spite of the many dissertations which have been written about this subject, it has not yet been fully determined whether it ought to be spelled "Snivel" or "Sneevel". Judge Snivel, we say, counted among his ancestors many Snivels or Sneevels who had done service to their country in some judicial capacity. Our Snivel likewise occupied the respectable position of a county judge. He was a man of tall stature and corresponding size, one with whom it was more profitable under any circumstances to agree than to disagree, for personal considerations. After he had finished his eulogies about the porker, Pancho took the liberty of asking about the condition of the Talking Image.

A frown appeared upon the noble brow of the judge. "It is all an infernal humbug," he said. "I took the Image into my house, expecting that it would be a prophetess and of some service to me. At least I expected that it would answer questions in a dignified, polite, and ladylike manner; but I am sorry to say the prophetess has turned into a termagant, abusing everybody and using the vilest of language. If you want to see Minerva assuming claws and come down upon you like a barrel of swill, all you have to do is to contradict what she says, or pretend that you are not of the same opinion with her. There is not a fishwife in my community that can beat that statue in using blasphemous and vituperative language. In a dispute with it, the devil himself would surely come out only second best. In every bargain in which I consulted the Image, I always got the worst of it when I followed its directions. But this is not all. Its very presence in my house has caused me a great deal of trouble. The people of this town who formerly used to respect me, now begin to look upon me as a dunce and a fool. They avoid me, and when they see me they shrug their shoulders and put on mysterious airs. When my name is pronounced they whisper something about insanity. But I am going to make an end of all this. To-day it shall be handed over to the medical executioners, and we shall see what kind of devils are inside of it."

Thereupon Pancho attempted to explain to Mr. Snivel the constitution of the Image, and that it was merely a living echo for people's innermost thoughts, rendering their own states of feeling in uttered language, in about the same sense as one might translate the language of music into speech. He told the judge some of his own experience with the statue, to prove to him that the Image would sometimes echo the thoughts of a person, of which the latter himself was unconscious, but which nevertheless existed in the deepest recesses of his mind.

"Even the best friends of the Image," continued the judge,

without seeming to listen to this explanation, "are not safe from its denunciations. It is the worst gossipier I ever saw, and I actually believe that there would be nothing more painful to it than if it were forced to speak the truth. It would a thousand times rather tell a lie than speak the truth, even for once. If you can make it say only one single truth, its life shall be spared."

"Don't you see," replied Pancho, "that it is not the Image that lies and gossips; but the people themselves lying to each other and gossiping through the instrumentality of the Image? It is like a mirror, and in its constitution there is neither falsehood nor truth."

"We shall soon see about that," said the judge. "The doctors will be here in a few minutes, and they will make short work of its constitution."

"I am sorry," answered Pancho, "that the doctors will have to be disappointed, because the Image is the legal property of The Society for the Distribution of Wisdom, and cannot be destroyed without their consent."

"What kind of a concern is this Society for the Distribution of Wisdom?" asked the judge.

"It is one of the queerest concerns I ever saw," replied Pancho. "It consists of people who are seeking after something they do not know, and in the existence of which they do not believe."

"What kind of wisdom do they distribute?" inquired Snivelinsky.

Pancho shrugged his shoulders. "Their wisdom," he said, "appears to me as much like the wisdom of other people, as the egg of a fowl is like the egg of a chicken. They believe one theory to-day, and another to-morrow."

"What do they teach?"

"They pretend to teach nothing," said Pancho. "Nevertheless each of its representative members teaches whatever he pleases or what he may imagine to be true, and they do

that in a very boisterous manner; hurling epithets against every one who dares to disbelieve or contradict their opinions."

"Oh!" exclaimed the judge, "is it there where the statue acquired its bad habits? But what are the principles of that Society?"

"The most admirable ones—on paper," answered Pancho. "In theory they proclaim universal love and fraternity; but in their practice they fight with each other like cats and dogs."

"What are their objects?"

"Judging from my own observation, their objects are to desecrate and vulgarize the ideal; to drag spiritual truth before the judgment-seat of the fool, and to sacrifice everything for the vainglorification of self."

Snivelinsky seemed to pay little attention to this explanation. His mind was fully absorbed in the contemplation of the appetite of his porker. After a while he said—

"What seems to me most remarkable is, that ever since I left Italy, the statue has been continually increasing in weight. I carried it with me in a box, and on every station where it was weighed, it weighed much more."

"This may be explained," answered Pancho, "by the difference in the mental atmospheres of the countries through which you were travelling. The more gross and material the thoughts of a people, the more will they find expressions in gross and material forms."

After breakfast Pancho and the judge went up stairs into a garret, where the Talking Image was already laid out upon a table, preparatory to being dissected. It was evidently of a denser and more material substance than when Pancho had seen it at Urur. Upon its forehead rested a scowl; otherwise its features were perfectly tranquil, as if it did not care about being vivisected, or knew nothing about the terrible fate that awaited it.

For a while Pancho stood still, regarding the Image and thinking of the doctors who were soon to arrive to make an

end to its constitution, when he heard a rumbling noise, and then a voice as if coming from the interior of the Image spoke and said—

“A single doctor like a sculler plies ;
The patient lingers and at last he dies.
But two physicians, like a pair of oars,
Waft him with swiftness to the Stygian shores.”

“Do you hear it?” exclaimed the judge. “It reviles and denounces everything and everybody. No profession, no age, no sex, no social condition or religion is safe from its vilifications. It denounces everything, even denunciation itself.”

“These verses,” answered Pancho, “are not its own composition. I remember having read them somewhere many years ago. It seems that they were stored up in some corner of my memory and have now been reflected upon the Image.”

“After all,” said the judge, “these verses contain some truth. There is no doubt that the doctors have killed my younger brother, and that he would be alive to-day if he had never followed their advice. If it interests you, I will tell you how it happened.”

Pancho consented, and the judge began as follows :—

“My brother was a strong and healthy man like myself, and of a very robust constitution. He was never afraid of anything and there was nothing that did him any harm. He feared neither heat nor cold, neither sunshine nor rain, nor draughts of air; nor was he ever afraid that anybody would poison him, or that the cook would boil or stew something that he could not digest. But one unfortunate day, cursed be its memory !—my poor brother made the acquaintance of a doctor. It was a doctor of Hygienics, one of those that give no medicine, and are not generally supposed to belong to a dangerous class. However soon after my brother had made that unfortunate acquaintance, he began to be somewhat careful about his diet and food and the state of the weather,

and lots of other nonsensical things. Formerly he could have lived, according to the best of my knowledge, on pebble stones and ground glass; but now he began to criticize his grub and found always fault with the cook. There was one thing after another he had to quit; because the doctor said that it might not agree with his stomach or that it might be adulterated and what not. He could not eat any more meat, because he had a list of about fifty of the most terrible diseases that come from eating meat. He could drink no more beer or wine, nor coffee nor tea, and when he tried it with chocolate, the doctor frightened him away even from that, by telling him about verdigris and cinnabar, with which it might be adulterated."

"Surely he could have eaten bread?" said Pancho.

"Anything made out of flour," replied the judge, "was out of the question; because flour is adulterated with gypsum, alum, jalap, blue vitriol, quartz, chalk, white lead, clay, sand, borax and other poisons of a deadly kind."

"Vegetables?" suggested Pancho.

"How could he have lived on vegetables?" cried the judge. "To say nothing about their being coloured with verdigris and pickled with sulphuric acid, one half of the doctors he consulted told him that it was unnatural and unhealthy to eat cooked vegetables; while the other half told him that there could be nothing more pernicious to one's health than to eat them raw? Moreover my brother did not like vegetables without salt or pepper, or a speck of vinegar; and the doctor said that salt and vinegar were the worst kitchen poisons that were ever invented. As to pepper, he would not hear of it; because he said that it was nearly as bad as tobacco."

"How about milk?" asked Pancho.

"Milk!" sobbed the judge, overcome by emotions awakened by the memory of his brother. "Would you have my poor brother poisoned with chalk-water and rotten calfs' brains?"

"Butter?" exclaimed Pancho.

"Oleo-margarine," sighed Mr. Snivel.

"Sugar?"

"Sand, ground glass, white lead," groaned the judge.

"But he must have had something to eat."

"I tell you there was nothing for him that was not adulterated or might have been so. Moreover he began to be afraid of everything, and not without reason; for everything did him harm. He took to living on fruits; but he was always afraid that they would give him the colic; and sure enough they did give him the colic. So he had to quit even that."

"And what became of him?" asked Pancho.

"He died out of fear that he could not live any longer, and the doctor said that if he had only begun to diet himself sooner, he might have become all right."

Overcome by these sad recollections the judge wiped his nose with his handkerchief.

"His was a lingering death," he continued. "For a long time he was sick; actually starving to death. He suffered much; but at last we took pity on him and called in another doctor in consultation, and he gave him something to quiet him. It quieted him so much that we had to bury him three days afterwards."

"Comfort yourself," said Pancho. "In less than three hundred years from now, the medical profession as a whole will have discovered that man is a product of will and thought, and that there can be no other rational system of medicine for good or evil, than by acting upon his will and imagination. There is no other physician than *Faith*. Your brother ought to have dismissed his doctor and made a voyage, so as to get a change of surroundings and to divert his mind from his gloomy thoughts."

"Made a voyage!" ironically exclaimed the judge. "How could he have avoided stopping at hotels?"

"But why should he not have stopped at hotels?" asked Pancho surprised,

"It seems," answered the judge, "that you are not up to the latest discoveries in medicine. You do not seem to know that a person may catch consumption by staying in a room which has once been inhabited by a consumptive person. Have you never heard of bacillæ and microbes? Where will you go to escape them?"

A rap at the door interrupted the conversation; a servant entered, handing to the judge a card, upon which was printed—

<p>DR. C. A. LOMEL, Professor of Medicine.</p>
--

"Death approaches," said the judge.

"The other gentlemen are waiting below," said the servant.

"Fear not," said the judge to Pancho. "No harm shall befall the Image. For once it spoke the truth and the verses have saved its life. Remain until I return. If they are not willing to go, I shall use my authority."

So saying the judge shook his fist and descended the stairs, where he found the medical practitioners already waiting. They were very much displeased when they heard that the legal owner of the Image had been found and that the statue could not be dissected. Dr. Lomel especially was very much incensed. He had brought with him a large boxful of knives, saws, chisels, gags, syringes, and other anatomical instruments.

"What does this new nonsense mean?" he exclaimed frantically. "It seems that Herr von Snivelinsky is determined to continue in the sleight-of-hand business and does not wish his tricks to be exposed."

"A nice kind of a business we have done this morning,"

sarcastically said another. "We have lost our valuable time and our travelling expenses."

"I shall remunerate you for your trouble," answered the judge; "but the statue cannot be dissected without the consent of the owner. Moreover it is a living thing and cannot bear vivisection."

At this declaration there arose a general murmur among the doctors.

"Living or not living," they said, "if there is something remarkable about it, it ought to be sacrificed to science."

"It reflects the thoughts of other people," said the judge.

This statement was received with uproarious laughter and cries of "Nonsense!"

"You are sick without knowing it, and should go through a regular course of treatment," said one of the doctors, addressing the judge.

"Thoughts, my friend," said another, tapping Mr. Snivel condescendingly upon the shoulder, "are four dimensional dynamides and cannot be reflected."

"I move," said a third, "that a committee be appointed for a *de lunatico inquirendo*."

"I move," retorted Mr. Snivelinsky, "that you make yourselves scarce at your earliest convenience, and if you do not understand this plain language, I shall use an *argumentum ad hominem*. The Image does not require your services. It has had a distemper; but this morning a stranger has arrived and brought a remedy, and it is now decidedly better."

"What! Who is that fellow," roared out Dr. Lomel, "who dares to practice medicine in this country? Has he any certificates to entitle him to cure people? You, Mr. Snivelinsky, are a judge. You ought to see that the laws of this country are not infringed upon without punishment, and the health of the community endangered by a foreign quack."

"Such a recovery," said another doctor, "is entirely illegitimate, irrational, and contrary to the interests of science."

"I wish we had come sooner," groaned one of his colleagues.

"When will the dissection begin?" asked another who was hard of hearing, and who had not understood the conversation.

"There will be no dissection, sir," shouted Dr. Calomel into his ear. "The patient has recovered."

"Oh!" exclaimed the hard-hearing doctor. "Such a thing has never happened to me in my life."

It was with great difficulty that the doctors were made to retire. Snivelinsky settled their bills, and as he did not have enough cash in the house, they took away hams and pickled pork, an old clock, a coat, and a family Bible—not however without the consent of the judge, who was glad to get rid of them at any cost. As they left, they cast wistful glances up to the garret which contained the Talking Image.

During this time Pancho remained alone with the Image, thinking of the medical superstitions of our days and how impossible it is to eradicate them at once. He saw that there is no *vacuum* in nature, neither in the physical world nor in the world of mind, and that ideas are indestructible and cannot be rooted out, but must be displaced by other ideas. He knew that the vaunted medical agnosticism of our times is not much better than the destructive science of the past, but that it would serve as a stepping-stone to a better and more rational system—one that would cure the will and the mind, instead of that false system which merely seeks to suppress the external manifestation of internal causes.

He was disturbed in his meditations by a voice coming from the Image, which said,

"Cursed be every one who does not blow in our horn! There are several kinds of wisdom; one that comes from the East and another that comes from the West, but that which comes from the East is the best, and must be accepted."

"Ungrateful wretch!" exclaimed Pancho. "Is this your gratitude for my saving your life, that you now again try to

put poison into my ear? There is only one wisdom, because there is only one truth; and it comes neither from the East nor from the West, but from the attainment of self-knowledge."

While Pancho was speaking, the rosy light which he had once perceived at the shrine at Urur, appeared again in the room, and a golden flame floated about the head of the Image. A struggle between light and darkness seemed to take place within the body of the statue, but the light became victorious, for the flame became absorbed by the body of the Image, and a great change took place in the latter. The previously lifeless eyes became lit up by the light of intelligence, a smile played around its lips, the Image began to breathe, and arose from the table.

"*There is only one truth,*" it said solemnly, "and this is the magic word which, as you have pronounced it, has broken the spell that kept me enchained in matter. Listen, O mortal! You have in vain attempted to find perfection in this world of illusion. You have had occasion to fully convince yourself that there is not a single department in our present civilization in which you will not find the vilest deception and frauds, gross ignorance and wilful imposture. Science and religion, medicine and philosophy, politics and trade, love and marriage, and everything that you may name, not excepting The Society for the Distribution of Wisdom, is full of humbug and ignorance. Even a humbug itself is a lie, because it is not all humbug, but contains a spark of truth. Crime is a lie, because it is the result of ignorance, and therefore not thoroughly criminal. Do you now know the reason why God has created the world?"

"Surely," answered Pancho, "He did it for no other purpose than to have it carried off by the devil!"

"Lo!" said the Image, "I will tell you where you can find the key to the understanding of the mystery; but the understanding I cannot give. The universal panacea, the cure of all evils of body and soul, is MERCURY, the symbol of

wisdom. It must be distilled in the water of thought, and purified by the fire of Divine Love, and it will then cure ignorance, the mother of all ills that afflict mankind. It is the true Elixir of Life; but it is only accessible to the favourites of God; to those that have been well circumcised and cut entirely loose from all the bondage of matter. Think not that you can find anything without blemish in a world where evil is as omnipresent as good. There is no good without evil, neither can you destroy evil without at the same time destroying the good contained therein. Therefore it is said that we must let the wheat and the tares grow together until the day of the harvest."

"And will not the tares destroy the wheat if they are permitted to grow?" asked Pancho.

"Have you so little faith in the superior power of good," said the Image, "that you cannot see that it is greater than evil? Does not the most delicious fruit grow upon the richest manure? There is a higher love than the attraction of the senses; there is a higher knowledge than that of the reasoning intellect. Divine Wisdom is higher than human philosophy, and the justice of the Supreme more powerful than man-made law."

"How can we make mankind realize the sublimity of Divine Truth?" inquired Pancho.

The answer was:

"No man can teach another the truth if the truth does not manifest itself in and through him. Do not follow those that in a loud voice claim to be able to show you the truth, but seek for the truth itself. You cannot expose the truth, but you can expose ignorance. Let the truth be hidden from the eyes of the fool, but put the fool upon a pedestal, so that others may recognize in him their own folly."

"What about the Mysterious Brotherhood?" asked Pancho.

He received no answer. Before his eyes a great transformation took place. Brighter and brighter shone the light in

the interior of the Image, and the statue grew more and more ethereal and transparent. It was as if the whole substance of its body had become changed into a cloud of living light, through which the objects in other parts of the room could be seen. The whole form was in a state of harmonious vibration, trembling and swaying to and fro like a gossamer cloud in the morning breeze. At last even the cloud-like appearance was gone ; there was nothing of a material character left ; the Image had become all soul—a streak of supernatural glory—which slowly faded away.

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

THE story of the Talking Image is finished. It is the old and nevertheless always new story of immortal truth coming from the land of light and seeking to manifest its presence by means of such instruments as are capable of being illumined by it ; but as these instruments are human and therefore belonging to the kingdom of matter and darkness, the rays of the divine light become distorted in them. For ever eternal love seeks to penetrate the petrified crust surrounding the human heart and to send its power within the "philosophical egg," wherein is hidden the true spiritual gold, of which the world knows so little ; while the outer shell, like a living mirror, reflects the images of terrestrial things, which humanity mistakes for realities—thereby creating for themselves a world of illusions, from which spring the evils that are afflicting mankind.

Thus far we have nothing to add to our story ; but as numerous requests have reached the writer, asking for information of what ultimately became of Conchita and Pancho, we have made diligent inquiry, and are now prepared to render the following account :

Pancho, in consequence of his experiences, had become fully convinced that pure and unadulterated truth cannot be found in anything in this mundane sphere ; but that there is likewise

nothing which does not contain a certain spark of truth, of God, or eternal life ; and that within the human organism this spark may be blown into a flame, whose heat causes the heart to glow with divine love and whose light illuminates the mind with divine wisdom. He was perfectly sure that this could not be accomplished by any external means or ceremonies ; neither by holding one's breath, nor by believing in certain doctrines, nor by learning by heart all the books in the world, together with all the sayings of the sages ; but that it must be accomplished by internal means. So great, however, is the strength of ingrown ideas, that Pancho still imagined that it depended on him to develop himself.

We are quite sure that every one of our intelligent readers will smile at the absurdity of Pancho's idea of developing one's own self, instead of being contented to be guided and made to grow by the spirit. A man may aid nature in developing his muscles or his intellect, by employing the superior power with which he is endowed by the spirit, and because these things are below him ; they are not himself, but are merely parts of his organism ; but surely no one can develop his spirit—himself—any more than he could pull himself out of a swamp by taking hold of the hair on the top of his head. The inferior cannot control the superior ; man cannot educate God. All that man can do in the way of aiding the spirit to develop man, is to be obedient to divine Law.

Having left the judge and his family, Pancho went to Vienna, where he had no difficulty in finding the house of the stranger. It was situated in one of the suburbs of the city, in a secluded spot, surrounded by a little park, filled with ornamental trees and shrubbery. It was an unostentatious building, but quite remarkable on account of the oddity of its architecture. It was built of some stone-like material, and three stories high, with projecting windows and turrets, balconies and verandas, each side differing from the other in style ; so that, seen from different points of view, it did not appear to be the

same house ; for while its northern side, fronting the public street, had a forbidding appearance, looking like the stronghold of some Christian knight of the Middle Ages, its southern side was very pleasing, resembling a lofty Buddhist temple, ornamented with flowers and creeping vines. Seen from the west it had a decidedly Egyptian character. There was a large cave-like entrance, with massive columns, guarded by a Sphinx of enormous size ; but the eastern aspect represented an excellent imitation of an ancient Grecian temple, with a marble basin and a spring-fountain, surrounded by statues.

When Pancho arrived, the place seemed deserted. He rang the bell at the door and rapped ; but nobody opened. After waiting for a long time and repeatedly knocking in vain, he made up his mind to try the door, to see whether it was locked. He pushed, and to his surprise he found that the door was only ajar, and that there was nothing to prevent him to enter. He therefore entered and ascended the broad marble stairs, which led him into an interior hall, where he found several doors leading into different apartments. One of these he entered, and found himself in a magnificent room, surrounded by a great many mirrors of different sizes and forms, that were placed along the walls. There were no windows ; but the room was brilliantly illumined by a kind of electric or magnetic light, coming from an altar in the centre of the apartment. This light was reflected in all the mirrors ; but more especially from one great concave mirror in the middle of the front wall, which caught the rays of the light and threw them into the little mirrors, where they sparkled like so many diamonds.

Full of surprise Pancho approached that mirror and saw therein his own image reflected, although magnified into superhuman dimensions. While his attention was directed intensely toward that mirror, and while he was wondering about this strange phenomenon, his consciousness became suddenly centred in that image, and then it seemed to him as if he himself were that image, looking out of the mirror, and as

beheld his figure reflected from all the little mirrors along the walls. He curiously watched this multiplication of his own self, and he saw that his image was assuming various forms, according to the nature of the mirrors ; for some of these mirrors were plain, others concave or convex ; some many-sided, others partly straight or crooked or bent, so as to make his face appear in many ridiculous shapes. There were Panchos with broad faces, and mouths grinning from ear to ear, and others whose heads were spindle-like and narrow with little eyes and noses of fearful length.

While watching this curious play, he noticed to his surprise that each of the images in the mirrors began to act as if it had a life and a consciousness of its own and imagined itself to be Pancho himself, and while they were thus acting and doing many things which he himself would not have done, some of the mirrors became blurred and opaque so that he could no longer recognize his own image in them ; and what was still more curious, was the fact that Pancho felt as if his own life was in these little mirrors, and whenever his image in one or another of them became less clear or extinguished, it was as if a part of his own life had been extinguished with it ; a circumstance which caused Pancho to grieve ; but whenever his image in any of these mirrors became more bright and more natural, he then felt an inexpressible joy, as if his own life had been strengthened and rendered happier thereby. Then Pancho knew that what he had seen was a representation of the creation of Man, for God had likewise created man in His own likeness, to be His own image and like Him in all respects ; but the self-will and the perverted imagination of man continually causes the divine image to become weakened, blurred, distorted, and even effaced in him.

While Pancho was meditating about this subject, he suddenly heard the well-known voice of the master of the house addressing him and bidding him welcome. The appearance of the stranger, however, had greatly changed ; for he now saw

him before him in a pure white robe, embroidered with red silk and ornamented with gold ; while upon his breast hung a golden cross, beset with a star of rubies, in the centre of which shone a diamond. The stranger himself seemed taller in stature, his face was radiant with joy, and a light of a peculiar nature, evidently coming from his interior, illumined and emanated from his form.

"Are you then," exclaimed Pancho, "one of the Mysterious Brotherhood, for which I have been seeking so long without being able to find it?"

"The Mysterious Brotherhood," answered the stranger, whose name was Heliodorus, "has been with you always ; but you could not find it, because you sought for it in externalities, instead of within your own inner world. Foolish indeed is he who seeks for the things of the spirit anywhere except within the realm of the spirit or for God outside of that which is divine."

"I am surprised," said Pancho, "to hear you speak in that manner ; for surely you, being a Mysterious Brother, do not believe in anything divine or supernatural?"

To this Heliodorus replied :—

"The clinging to the supernatural is the only salvation for man. God is the All and cannot be found outside of Nature ; but Nature is not God. Wisdom is the living mirror, wherein God beholds His own self. To Nature belongs limitation and time and the love of self ; but God is eternal. Divine justice and truth, love and wisdom belong to the spirit ; neither could Nature produce anything, if it were not by the power of God."

"If I understand you correctly," said Pancho, "God is a divine principle, existing within the centre of our own being and which we must seek to develop by our own power. How can man develop God within himself and cause Him to grow?"

"This is a feat," replied Heliodorus, "which no man has ever accomplished, nor will any one ever accomplish it ; because it

would require a God to produce a God, and man is not a God-maker. You may as well ask, How can a corpse cause itself to be alive? How can a tree cause itself to grow, or, how can we cause the sun to shine when it is night? All that the corpse can do is to remain quiet, all that we can do to aid the growth of a tree, is to surround it with favourable conditions; all that we can do when it is night, is to open our eyes and wait for the coming of the new day." Upon this Pancho asked :—

"Is it then absolutely impossible that man can do anything to render himself wise?"

"All that he can do for that purpose," answered Heliodorus, "is to avoid that which renders him foolish. None can give to himself the true understanding. All he can do, is to wait patiently until divine wisdom descends upon him by its own grace; for eternal truth is free and self-existent and not in the keeping of man."

"What!" exclaimed Pancho. "Would you cater to idleness by relying upon inspiration, instead of using your own efforts?"

"There will be no occasion for idleness," answered Heliodorus, "you will find that it requires all your strength to keep your earthly self subdued, so that you may become capable to receive the true inspiration. The rosebud cannot attract to itself the light of the sun, but opens its leaves while under its influence. Man cannot drag wisdom down to the comprehension of his finite understanding; but in proportion as he is wise, he may rise up to the eternal fountain of truth."

"This theory," said Pancho, "is far too simple and easy of comprehension to be accepted by science, which teaches that we can accomplish nothing except by the exercise of our own will."

To this Heliodorus answered :—

"Grass is for the cow and intellectual knowledge for the reasoning intellect; but the secrets of God are for the spirit of

God. Not the ability of man ; but the divine spirit searches the depths of Divinity. The attempt of the Intellect to become the equal of God was the cause of Lucifer's fall."

During this discourse Pancho had closed his eyes, being dazzled by the light that issued from the stranger, and which increased in intensity as he spoke. When he opened them again he found himself in a plain but neatly-furnished room. The light and the mirrors were gone, and before him stood Heliodorus, dressed in plain clothes, and looking as Pancho had seen him at the time of the accident, without anything wonderful or extraordinary about him.

"I am glad," said Heliodorus, "that you have come. I found you in a state of deep meditation, and did not want to disturb your dreams."

"A fool indeed," answered Pancho, "would be he who would mistake such a vision for a dream. No! It was to me a perfect reality. I have seen the celestial light and been to your place of meeting."

"Our place of meeting," replied Heliodorus, "is at the little coffee-tavern round the corner. I go there occasionally to play a game of chess. But now," he added, "do not trouble yourself about mysterious brotherhoods ; but having returned to external life, accept the external comforts which I can offer you."

Heliodorus was an open and upright man ; one in whose finite heart dwelt a great deal of infinite love. He was of strong spiritual, intellectual, and physical power ; a natural mystic, and therefore treating with contempt all mysticism, sophistry and pious or scientific pretence. His place in society was neither too elevated, so as to force him to come out of his modest seclusion, nor too low, so as to render it necessary to give all his thoughts and attention to gaining his daily bread. He was considered wealthy ; but his wealth was no burden to him ; because he did not cling to it with his heart. His kindness and honesty enabled him to go to bed every evening with

a clear conscience, which rested upon his heart like a plaster made of roses and myrrh, such as was described in Carambas's *Book of Mysteries*, and he often made the moon on the sky of his imagination stand still, and immersed his carnal reason in a bath of holy thought at the centre of his soul, in the light of the sun of wisdom, and whenever the thought of a "rhinoceros" tried to enter his mind, he had the power to promptly eject it.

Due to his superior power of grasping high and exalted ideas, and to concentrate his thoughts upon one thing, together with his deep learning in natural science, he had made many useful discoveries and inventions, and, unexplainable as it may be from the standpoint of exact science, he often showed a foresight, that bordered on the miraculous. He often knew of things that happened at a great distance, and of which he could have received no information in the ordinary way; and if the belief in Clairvoyants, Alchemists, Rosicrucians and the like, had not been exploded in this enlightened age by the representatives of rational science, there would have been many people who would have believed him to be addicted to magic arts. As it was, popular ignorance and disbelief in regard to everything that belongs to the spiritual side of nature enabled him to live unmolested by the doctors, the clergy, and the police.

The two friends went to an adjoining room, which was a chemical laboratory, and Pancho was surprised to find it to be the exact counterpart of the room which he had seen in his visions at Venice. There were the same bottles of curious shapes, instruments, books and paintings, and over the fireplace there hung that identical painting, dark from age, and representing the Archangel Michael in the battle with the dragon of selfishness; such as he had seen in his dream. Pancho expressed his surprise at this coincidence.

"Coincidences often take place," said Heliodorus, "but they do not occur without a cause. It seems to me, that the

coincidence in this case was caused by a momentary amalgamation of your outer and inner states of consciousness ; which enabled your mind to remember some of your interior experiences while your external form was asleep."

"Are we then conscious when we sleep?" asked Pancho.

"The spirit of man," answered Heliodorus, "having once awakened to its divine self-consciousness, is divine, and God never sleeps ; only the animal sleeps and becomes unconscious of the presence of the divine spirit."

"But why," asked Pancho, "do men not know and realize that there is the spirit of God residing within themselves?"

"Because," replied Heliodorus, "they are not following the will of God ; but their own will, which is an obstacle to the light of the true understanding. The gods in whom mankind believe exist only in the realm of their imagination ; their will worships the devil of Self."

"One of old, representing personified eternal truth, is reported to have said, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows me, will find eternal life.' He does not say, 'Go to the Mysterious Brotherhood and learn what kind of a description they give about the light ;' but 'follow the Light itself, and seeing the Light, you will see the Truth ; for the Light itself is the Truth.' These words the truth still speaks in every human heart and to every one who will listen ; for the truth has not died, although its light is not seen by every one."

"I see," said Pancho ; "this light comes to every one according to his own moral merits."

"Woe to the man," exclaimed Heliodorus, "who would obtain only that which he merits ! Show me the man who has deserved to live, or who has caused the sun to shine upon him by his own merits. Man being nothing can do nothing to merit anything. All that is in his nature is a gift of nature ; all his spiritual possessions are a gift of the grace and mercy of God."

Wonderful were the things which he saw at the laboratory of his friend, and which we cannot describe; neither would we expect to be believed if we were to describe them. The alchemical experiments performed by Heliodorus had nothing in common with chemistry; for while the latter merely decomposes and recomposes the external forms in which the principle of matter is manifesting itself, Alchemy deals with that principle itself, causing it to produce corporeal forms out of the invisible *Chaos*, and using for that purpose the *magic fire* of the spirit, the powerful *Fohat* of which physical science does not know.

Pancho remained at the house of his friend. He studied the Bible and the works of Theophrastus Paracelsus and Jacob Boehme—not merely by means of his rational intellect, but by entering into the spirit in which these books were written; and the deeper he entered into that spirit, the more did his mind become clear of metaphysical phantasms; and the cobwebs which the African sun could not remove from Pancho's brain, became removed by the light that began to dawn at the very centre of his own soul.

Formerly Pancho had worshipped at the shrine of the speculating intellect, seeking to acquire wisdom by his own power. He had always been proud of accepting nothing on faith, and rejecting everything that he could not grasp with his intellect; forgetting that no one can examine a thing unless he believes that it exists. Now he saw that eternal truth is far too high and exalted to be conceived by the carnal mind; and that the true Faith, spiritual perception, is the corner-stone which the builders reject; but which after all is the corner-stone without which their temple of knowledge will fall to pieces before it is ready to receive the roof.

Now he began to sacrifice his own wisdom upon the altar of the divine spirit, making the intellect his servant instead of obeying him as his master, and as he continued to do so the

long-desired light of the inner world at last broke suddenly through the clouds, and he found himself in a realm of joy, of which words can give no description. Then it was that, in consequence of his interior unfolding, the secrets of Alchemy became revealed to him—not because he was curious to know them, but because they were necessary concomitants of the higher state of existence into which he had entered.

While at this stage Pancho discovered himself the truth of what Heliodorus had told him, namely, that the attainment of divine wisdom does not depend on man's willing and running,¹ but that it comes to man by its own grace, if he is ready to receive it; for the wisdom of God would not be divine, and could not be wisdom if it were not free, or if it were subject to the laws of nature or the whims and desires of man. Being the Law itself, it cannot be subject to laws; it is merely its manifestations that can be obstructed by disobedience to the law.

As this truth became clear to Pancho's mind, there came over him a realization of his own nothingness, and he was now fully convinced of the uselessness of all his struggles and the impossibility to accomplish anything by his own power, without the aid of that eternal, omnipresent, self-existent, and independent power, which is itself the light and the truth; which is neither a product of nature nor of the mind; but which uses nature and the mind as instruments to reveal itself to the spirit of man.

Where was now the value of all his learning and erudition concerning the secrets of God? All his previously-acquired knowledge and philosophy now appeared to him useless and foolish. Oh, how little did the great Pancho suddenly become as the self-conceit of his imaginary wisdom departed and a sense of deep humiliation, amounting to

¹ Romans ix. 16.

annihilation, took possession of his mind! Oh, how did the vainglory of all worldly wisdom sink suddenly into nothingness when he began to perceive that which he had formerly speculated about, when he saw that man is nothing and God is All, and that even the wisest of men can have no other wisdom than the wisdom of God revealed in and through them!

He now knew that it is impossible for man by merely intellectual efforts to bore a hole through the curtain that veils the sanctuary of *Isis*, so that he may peep through it and gratify his curiosity; but that he must first go through the slow process of attaining spirituality before the mysteries of the spirit can be revealed to him by the spirit itself.

It would require the writing of another volume if we were to attempt to report all the important subjects that were discussed by Heliodorus and Pancho, or to follow the processes of the unfoldment of the inner life of the latter. It may be sufficient to state that as Pancho's self-will and imagination became, as it were, nailed upon a cross and entirely helpless and inactive, and subject to the universal law of the spirit the thing called "Pancho" died. Not that his form decayed or was buried in the grave, but the animal elementals, together with all the scribes and pharisees, doctors, philosophers, scientists and theologians, semi-intellectual and intellectual beings that formerly had held high carnival in his soul and prevented him from obtaining the true knowledge of the spirit died and vanished, and the spirit of light and truth and joy entered into a glorious resurrection in him. As he entered this new life, he entered into a new phase of existence, and each day some new blossom on the tree of knowledge opened before his eyes, disclosing still more wonders of nature, each more beautiful than the rest. He now wondered how he could have been blind so long, wan-

dering about in a fool's paradise of dreams and speculation, and keeping his eyes closed to the light of the truth ; how he had run after treasures that did not exist, and refused to recognize the greatest treasure of all that was already in his possession.

Then it was that Pancho fully realized that men have no life of their own, and he saw how far more important it is that they should come to life by the power of the truth than to speculate about what would become after death of those that had never lived ; for he knew that no man truly lives if the truth is not alive in him, and that even man's consciousness was merely imaginary, as it is not he himself who is conscious, but nature that has become conscious in him ; while his true consciousness belongs to quite another plane of existence, as is expressed by the words of the Bible, which says : "*We live*, but our consciousness is in heaven."

This great discovery was accompanied by another, namely, that of the nature of divine love, such as can only be acquired by obedience to the law. He now saw that love, like any other spiritual principle, is an eternal, self-existent power, manifesting itself in nature and man, but being independent of either. He saw that true love asks for nothing and has no selfish desire ; never wishing to take, but always giving itself without growing less by the giving. He now knew for certain that without the recognition of this universal principle divine wisdom could not be attained, and that there was no salvation for man except through woman, that is to say, through the divine marriage of the soul with that pure and spiritual element, which exalts and raises man out of the dark realm of matter and sensuality—the *Celestial Virgin*, whose beauty and grace is nowhere more manifest than in terrestrial woman, the glory and crown of creation.

But the third mystery that was revealed to Pancho when he

began to realise the existence of his own divine self seemed to him the greatest of all. He found that this "self" was as unlimited as space, and that its consciousness pervaded the world; capable of creating images of its own in the souls of his friends; and in these images it could live, and love, and think—just as it had been represented to him in his vision when he entered the house of Heliodorus. Thus he saw men and women living unconsciously and even consciously within each other, feeling and thinking and acting one in the form of the other, while nevertheless each one remained one individual whole. He then not merely believed, but *knew* that God in Humanity is only one, although humanity is divided by its external expression in terrestrial forms. When this fact of the unity of all mankind became clear to him, he understood the secret of the Mysterious Brotherhood without any further explanation.

One evening—it was Christmas time, and the nights were getting cold—Pancho went to a theatre to see one of Shakespeare's plays. It was late at night when he returned, and on his way home he was thinking of how necessary it is to employ fiction for the purpose of representing the truth; but that there were many who could only see the fiction and never perceived the truth.

While walking towards his residence, he noticed a crowd of people that had collected in one of the alleys. Thinking that an accident had happened he stopped, and as there was a policeman just emerging from the crowd, he asked him what was the matter.

"Nothing of any importance," said the officer; "only what happens every day. A drunken prostitute killed herself by jumping out of a window. I am going to fetch a cart to take her away."

So saying the policeman went away and Pancho approached the crowd. Indeed, lying insensibly in the gutter, there was

the body of a young woman dressed in rose-coloured silk, her arms and shoulders bare. Her face was covered with blood, and from her clothes there arose an odour of brandy. The crowd stood staring at her, none of them rendering any aid. Some indulged in jokes.

"Served her right," said one wretch; "these girls never know when to stop drinking."

Pancho elbowed his way through the crowd, and kneeling down by the side of the girl, he examined her by the light of a street-lantern in the distance. He took out his handkerchief and wiped the blood from her face; he turned her head towards the light and recognized Conchita.

Thereupon Pancho said—nothing. He merely took off his overcoat and wrapped it around the half-nude form of the woman. He wiped the clotted blood from her hair and examined her pulse, which he found still beating. There was still hope for her life, if life under such circumstances could be desirable.

A carriage arrived. He lifted her in, and holding her in his arms he drove to the hospital, where he engaged a room, and as she still continued unconscious, he left her in charge of the attendants and went away.

As he went on his way through the now silent streets to the house of his friend, he thought of all the misfortunes which his desire to gratify his curiosity had brought upon him and Conchita. However, he did not waste his time with vain regrets by dwelling within the ruins of the past, but remaining within the present, he looked towards the future.

He knew that the beautiful form whose life was now ruined was only one of the images produced by the power of the eternal Light upon the screen of nature, and that the Power which had produced Conchita, and which was her real life, was not lost, but would manifest itself again in due time either upon this or another earth. He knew that the soul lives

and passes from life to life in its external manifestations, as the butterfly passes from flower to flower, gathering honey from all and leaving the useless parts to their own fate. He knew that there is no evil which does not afford an experience which is good ; and the greater the evil, the greater the lesson that it will teach. Thus the infinite love of God turns everything to the best end.

Before his mental vision appeared the history of the world. It was a confused medley of blossoms, and flowers, and golden fruits, corruption and putrefaction ; blue laughing eyes becoming glazed in death ; sweet strains of music and joyful songs mixing with the roar of battle-guns and cries of despair. Out of this flood arose a face pale from suffering, but dignified and determined—the figure of terrestrial Man. He had been leading a blissful life, devoid of thought and free from sorrow, within the womb of universal Nature, his mother ; but the snake of desire had entered his dwelling and taught him to think and reflect. Then came the longing of love and the pain of hate ; the grief of separation and the pangs of the broken heart. Now a crown of thorns rested upon his brow, and his body was covered with self-inflicted wounds ; but within him shone the eternal light of love and truth like a clear and transparent fountain, and divine love at last became victorious over the desire, and the light conquered the darkness. Then became the *Son of Man* transfigured and glorified in the *Son of God*, the CHRIST, and Redeemer of mankind and entered into a state of bliss, above and beyond all thought, a realm of pure knowledge, adoration, and joy.

Everybody at Vienna knows the excellent hospital of Professor A— There the rich and the poor are taken in care in case of need and treated according to the best methods known to the art of surgery. Isolated stands the house in a park, where the air is purified by an abundance of trees

Broad galleries are attached to the house adjoining the patients' rooms, while the beds rest upon rails; so that they may easily be moved from the rooms to the open air without disturbing the sick. It is indeed a place where the cross is surrounded by roses; where suffering is rendered endurable by such means as science can offer.

There Conchita continued for some days in an unconscious condition. The medical examination showed a fracture of the collar-bone and a cut of the scalp, accompanied with a severe concussion of the brain. When her consciousness returned, she began to talk wild and confused. She was in a state of high fever, and during her delirium she spoke incoherently in Spanish, a language of which the nurse understood very little; hardly enough to make out that she was talking about a woman called Juana, and whom she described as having been hanged to the limb of a tree.

During all this time Pancho made frequent visits to the hospital. He engaged a room in the neighbourhood, so as to be immediately informed if any change were to occur. At last he received a message, saying that Conchita's reason had returned, and that she knew of his presence. It was added that she wished to see him immediately.

He went to the hospital, where he was met by the physician.

"The return of the normal consciousness," said the physician, "is often observed in such cases just before the approach of death. It seems like the flickering of a flame that makes one more effort to burn before it is extinguished for ever."

The senses of the dying are often very acute. It seems that their sphere of perception and consciousness expands as the prison-house of flesh opens its door to let out the emancipated soul. Such must have been the case with Conchita; for although the conversation between Pancho and the physician was carried

on in a low voice, and at a distance from the sick room, which would have, under ordinary circumstances, precluded the possibility of reaching the patient, nevertheless they suddenly heard her call in a faint voice, "O Pancho! My Pancho, come!"

Pancho knew that voice well. He had heard the same call from the pilot boat when he left San Francisco, and once he had heard it plainly in a dream. He opened the door and entered, and found his wife upon a snowy white bed, radiant with joy, and holding one of the roses which he had left for her on the previous day.

"Oh, my husband!" she exclaimed, stretching forth her hand; "I knew that you would come at last! Oh, how happy I am to see you!"

"Are you suffering, child?" asked Pancho.

"How can you speak about suffering when I am with you?" smilingly answered the dying woman. "I have suffered much; but now I am very happy. I never was so glad before! So glad!" she repeated. "Oh that this moment of joy would last for ever! I know it will last! I have waited for it so long!"

Then she drew Pancho towards her, and, regardless of her broken collar-bone, with one last effort she put her arm around his neck; just as in times of old when they had lived so happy together and before Pancho had met Mr. Puffer, the Chela. Her voice grew still more faint, and she whispered to him,

"Now, my beloved one, we must part no more; we shall be separated no longer. Do you know, dearest one, that I can now realize what is Love? It is God Himself. It is divine, infinite, and eternal. It is not dark in heaven as we supposed it was, for I am floating in an ocean of living light, surpassingly beautiful and beyond human conception! Our true love was not made for this world, which is far too little to hold it.

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It was made for eternity. It is far too great, too unbounded to be contained within a mortal form !”

Then after a pause, during which she looked deep into Pancho's eyes, she continued—

“I have been sick, very sick ; but now I am well. Kiss me once more, and let us be united for ever !”

Pancho kissed her upon the lips, and as he did so the arms that were fastened around his neck loosened their hold and dropped back upon the pillow. He arose and looked at her face. A blissful smile rested upon her countenance, like the last rays of the departing sun. He knew that he had kissed a corpse.

“She is dead !” said the nurse ; “let us pray !”

“She lives !” answered Pancho ; “let us rejoice ! If there is anything permanent and immortal, it is surely divine self-conscious love, manifested in a pure woman's heart !”

What would be the use of continuing this story ? What does it matter what became of Pancho ? He has served us as a dummy, to hang upon him the events of our story. Now we shall need him no longer. There is nothing immortal but God.

But for the gratification of the curious, who wish to know still more, we will say that the body of Conchita was buried, while her spirit went to the Kingdom of joy, and soon after her death, Pancho received a letter from Mr. Malaban, which contained the following :

“There is nothing higher than truth !—Everybody is well except Madame Corneille. The Hierophant has returned after a successful hunt for the subterranean hole, through which he went and visited Kakodumbola, the city of the Adepts. After him went Mr. Green, who has now been initiated by Krashibashi and become an Adept. Mrs. Honeycomb has run away with a black magician. I hope

that you are still loyal to Urur and faithful to Captain Bumpkins. Many strange things have happened here recently. What will interest you most is, that the Talking Image was found one day in its old place in the shrine ; but where it has been so long, and how it happened to return—this we are not permitted to tell.”

THE END.

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